DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

"There will be many stories"
museum anthropology, collaboration, and the Tlicho

Andrews, Thomas D.

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University of Dundee

“There will be Many Stories”

Museum Anthropology, Collaboration, and the Tłı̨chǫ

A thesis presented to the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design,
University of Dundee, Scotland, in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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2011

Dedicated to the memory of these and other elders

who continue to inspire us with their wisdom:

Mary Ruth Andrews, Harry Simpson, June Helm, and Elizabeth Mackenzie.

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Massicho.

Declaration

The candidate, below, is the author of the thesis and that, unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by the candidate; that the work of which the thesis is a record has been done by the candidate, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Thomas D. Andrews 02 November 2011

A Note on Transcription:

All Dene words are presented using the practical orthography of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The font 'Aboriginal Sans', produced by Christopher Harvey and available at languagegeek.com, is used to represent the orthographic conventions. All Dene words, except for proper names, are rendered in italics to set them apart from the text. Tłı̨chǫ spelling was checked against the online Tłı̨chǫ Dictionary Database at http://tlicho.ling.uvic.ca/. A few North Slavey words are represented here as well and, though this language presents some additional phonemes, the North Slavey phonemes included in this thesis overlap with Tłı̨chǫ and may be pronounced in a similar fashion. Please note, that North Slavey high tones are marked (ý) and low tones are unmarked. The Tłı̨chǫ phonemes are:

unaspirated stops and affricates -	b, d, dl, dz, j, g, gw
aspirated stops and affricates -	t, tł, ts, ch, k, kw
glottalized -	t', tł', ts', ch', k', kw'
glottal stop -	ʔ
voiceless continuants -	ł, s, sh, x, wh, h
voiced continuants -	l, z, zh, gh, w
prenasalized stops -	mb, nd;
nasals -	m ,n
resonants -	r, y
plain vowels -	a, e, i, o
nasalized vowels –	ą, ę, į ǫ
long vowels -	aa, ee, ǫǫ
dipthong -	ai
tones -	high (unmarked) and low (à, è, ì, ò)

Abstract

Museum anthropology, which can involve any or all of anthropology's subfields, is largely a performative, interdisciplinary enterprise using collaborative methods while engaged with knowledgeable and skilled members of the community, and involves creating new narratives about things of interest to the partners and wider public. This study interlinks applied anthropology, ethnography, ethnohistory, Indigenous archaeology, art, museums as places of interaction, and cultural revitalization, through the description of creative collaborative projects undertaken in partnership with Tłı̨chǫ and other Dene elders, artists, and other skilled practitioners between 1990 and 2011 by staff of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada. Exploring themes in the ontology and materiality of objects, relationships between humans and animals, links between technology and cosmology, the epistemology and ontology of Dene conceptions and experiences of the environment and ways of knowing, the composition of new landscapes through art, and the epistemological role of stories in the transmission of knowledge, the study demonstrates that these creative practices are performative and allow collaborators to engage in new ways of knowing, while building trust and respect between participants.

Chapter 1) Museums, Anthropology, and the Tłı̨chǫ—An Introduction

"On our way to a loch, two miles from Inveruplan,
Three of us (keepers) read the landscape as
I read a book. They missed no word of it:
Fox-hole, strange weed, blue berry, ice-scrape, deer's hoof-print.
It was their back yard, and fresh as the garden in Eden
(Striped rock 'like a Belted Galloway'). They saw what I
Saw, and more, and its meaning. They spoke like a native
The language they walked in. I envied them, naturally."[1]

"The land is like a book."[2]

Introduction

I discovered recently that I am a descendant of a long line of wheelwrights reaching back at least to the late 1700s. While reviewing the genealogical records of this history, an interesting pattern began to emerge: An ancestor sets up his wheelwright practice in a small village, raises a large family and, eventually, all of his sons become wheelwrights, too. However, since each village needs only one wheelwright, the younger sons soon leave, scattering over the region and setting up shops in other villages, carrying their skilled practice and their family name with them. The resulting multitude of wheelwrights all with the same surname, many sharing a family tradition of forenames, makes for a confusing record to decipher. In the early 1870s, one of the younger sons in this genealogical line sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and though the wheelwright tradition continued for another generation in the New World eventually, due to a series of tragic events common to many immigrant families, the long tradition of artisans became one of labourers.

Of particular interest to me was how these young wheelwrights—my great grandfather and theirs as well—learned their trade and so it was that I read "The Wheelwright's Shop," written by George Sturt[3] (2000). Published originally in 1923, Sturt's

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[1] First stanza of 'Among Scholars'; Norman MacCaig: Collected Poems, A New Edition. Chatto & Windus, London, 1990. P.168

[2] Harry Simpson, Gamètì, 1998.

[3] George Sturt (1863 – 1927) was born in Farham, Surrey, where he operated his wheelwright business.

account is a detailed view of his wheelwright's practice from 1884 to 1920. Trained and working as an English teacher, he inherited the wheelwright shop when his father died in 1884 and, since the business had been in the family since 1810, he felt compelled to continue it. The text is filled with an ancient terminology—chim, dutfin, felloe, flitch, futchell, midrave, urtcher plate, waney, or whippance, to name just a few—and though rare or even strange today, these were for Sturt and my forebears 'the language they walked in,' to borrow from Norman MacCaig's poem. Sturt's earlier role as an English teacher, coupled with a passion for writing, leaves him well prepared to tackle the subject of his new practice, but it is in the foreword, written by Marxist historian E.P. Thompson, that we find a clear link with the theme of this thesis. In describing Sturt's own training as a wheelwright he notes (ibid, xi):

> He was concerned to record in exact detail tools, their operation, and the materials operated on. This took him into dimensions of 'epistemology' which the academic mind, now as then, rarely enters or even allows for. It is the formation of knowledge, not from theory, but from practice and practical transmission, from the ground up. The skilled workman is taught by his materials, and their resources and qualities enter through his hand and thence to his mind. The artifact takes its form from the functions it must perform, the 'dish' of a wheel from the movement of the horses, the ruts in the tracks, the weight of the average load. These are not finely calculated on paper, they are learned through practice.

Thompson's passage suggests that an artisan learns by allowing the agency of his bodily actions, his tools, and materials to transfer knowledge from his hands to his mind, something that Tim Ingold (2001:114) has called an education of attention, and something Sturt himself notes by observing that "[m]y own eyes know because my hands have felt…" (ibid: 24). Sturt takes the reader through all of the processes involved in applying a wheelwright's skill to make an implement, from the art of tree felling, choosing and buying of trees 'in the round', the art of 'opening' the timber at the correct time depending on season and wood species, followed by sawing and careful and sometimes lengthy seasoning of the wood. Only then is the wood ready for the wheelwright to choose a piece for a task at hand, where it must show the proper dimensions, the appropriate shape, weight, and required grain.

Growing up the son of a wheelwright, Sturt must have learned the language of his father's trade through the osmosis of daily life; at the supper table, while doing small tasks in the shop, listening to the wheelwright's idiom during summer leave from school. Perhaps it was this ancient, particular language that inspired within him a passion for writing leading him to pursue a career as an English teacher and taking him away from the wheelwright shop. Returning to run the business when his father dies, he becomes a kind of participant observer, giving an ethnographic aspect to his book; an anthropologist-writer recording the daily goings-on of the wheelwright's practice. In this way, it is also an example of practice-led research where, using his skill as a writer, he examines the detailed workings of a wheelwright's craft, the acquisition and manipulation of raw materials through the skilful application of tools to create complex wheels, ploughs, and other implements, all without the need for texts, plans, or calculation. He becomes an apprentice, employing his skill as a writer to make a record of the skills he is learning.

It is in his role as an apprentice that I find an overlap with the enterprise described in these pages. For over 30 years I have worked as an archaeologist and anthropologist, almost all of it in the Canadian north, and though I have been fortunate to have undertaken and completed many projects, I still consider myself an apprentice. This is especially true when I have opportunity to work collaboratively with Dene elders for, when it comes to making a comfortable and safe life in the northern bush, I am always humbled at the extent of their knowledge and skill. For like the keepers of MacCaig's poem, the Dene have an intimate knowledge of their environment, catalogued in stories and places and realized through travel over vast distances. Tłı̨chǫ elder, Harry Simpson expresses this same sense when he notes that "the land is like a book." And like Sturt's, Dene eyes know because their 'hands have felt,' too, learning the skills necessary to live in the bush from their parents through the practice of daily life.

For the last two decades, I have worked at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, a territorial government-run museum with responsibilities to deliver a series of arts and heritage programs and a mandate to collect and interpret northern culture. Though employed as an archaeologist, my role has actually been more akin to that of a museum anthropologist, as the projects I have undertaken cross over many of the subfields within the discipline of anthropology. Thus, as a kind of anthropological chameleon, encouraged in my employment to change my focus as opportunity arose, I learned to be flexible, willing to take on new approaches to research and to be open to learning new methods. Sometimes this approach led me into troubled waters, where my own skills and knowledge were challenged

to complete a task, but in all cases I was able to rely on more knowledgeable partners, learning ultimately that a collaborative approach—whether multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature—was always the surest way to complete a complex and ambitious project. Thus, my own education, though still underway, has been largely experiential in nature, provided by skilled others who through their generosity have seen fit to sharing their knowledge with me. As I look back over my career and my own development, I can see that I am very much a different person from the one who, at 22 years of age, made his first foray into the anthropological 'field' with a trip to Old Crow in the northern Yukon in the late 1970s. A significant part of my education came between 1980 and 1989 when I worked for the Dene Mapping Project, a research group supporting the Dene Nation's land claims negotiations. Allowing me opportunity to visit every community in the Northwest Territories, forcing me through extensive work with maps, trails, and travel to become intimate with a northern geography and giving me the gift of lasting friendship throughout the north. However, it also allowed me to frame my own sense of the importance of social justice by providing an opportunity to assist the Dene[4] in their struggle to undo or at least lessen the impacts that colonialism and a dominant settler culture had imposed upon them. Between then and now, there have been a great many learning opportunities, each one bringing changes to my own worldview.

There have been many teachers and they are too numerous to mention, though a few have had a significant impact on me: Effie Linklater, a Gwich'in elder from Old Crow who showed a young man from the city how to set snares, clean fish, and other basics of bush life; Martha Rabisca, a Kashogot'ine elder from Fort Good Hope, who taught me how to pluck and singe ducks, find just the right branches for the floor of the tent and, with her large extended family, showed me just how rich life could be in the bush; George Blondin, a Sahtuot'ine elder who taught me about the wonder of stories and the importance of being patient when travelling on the ice; Paul Wright, a Shúhtagot'ine elder and philosopher who helped me understand the importance of sharing knowledge; Neil Colin, a Gwich'in elder who taught me the importance of humour in mediating difficult times; George Pellissey, a

[4] The Dene, meaning 'people,' speak one of over 30 Northern Athapaskan languages and occupy the Boreal Forest ecozone of the northern portions of the western Canadian provinces, the Yukon and Northwest Territories and Alaska. Rather than introduce each of the groups I have worked with here in the introduction, for ease of reading, I will address each group as they arise in the text.

Shúhtagot'ine elder who taught me a little about hunting; and to Elizabeth Mackenzie, a Tłı̨chǫ elder who taught me too many things to catalogue. Most of them are gone now. There are so many more but two names come forward in my memory more than any others; Harry Simpson and John B. Zoe, my research partners in several projects related to canoe travel and ethnoarchaeology. Together, we travelled thousands of kilometres over ancient birchbark canoe trails and through long proximity I have benefited greatly from their kindness, knowledge, and skill. Harry, whose name you will read many times in this thesis, stands above all the others, however, and for his gift of knowledge I am eternally grateful. Michael Asch and the late June Helm, both prominent and respected northern anthropologists, have been generous in sharing their knowledge and experience with me, too. To all I say massicho.

"What the map cuts up, the story cuts across"[5]

From a scholarly perspective this study interlinks themes in applied anthropology, ethnography, ethnohistory, archaeology, art, museums as places of interaction, and cultural revitalization, making it difficult to identify a single unifying theoretical or methodological approach. As a researcher I am interested in the ontology and materiality of objects, relationships between humans and animals, links between technology and cosmology, the epistemology and ontology of Dene conceptions and experiences of the environment and ways of knowing, and the epistemological role of stories in the transmission of knowledge. I am also interested in research advocacy, especially with respect to issues of social justice. Methodologically, I am interested in travelling on the land in traditional ways to try to learn how people perceive and experience it. I am interested in learning about objects by having someone teach me how to make them. I am interested in collaboration where many hands and minds can work together on a common objective. Something of all of these diverse things can be found in these pages. Using these methods, anthropology strives to understand the interrelation of the diverse processes—social relations, economic structures and forces, biological and mental processes, relationships between organisms and to their environment—that combine to frame what we think of as culture.

Working as a museum anthropologist in the Northwest Territories, I have been largely guided by the work of Julie Cruikshank, Robin Ridington, Keith Basso, David Smith, and Tim Ingold. From each I have taken specific articulations of their theoretical positions to

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[5] From Michel de Certeau (1988: 129).

cobble together a collage that helps me frame my own experience with the Dene. Though potentially discordant from an epistemological perspective there is sufficient commonality in their work to permit this approach as all focus on similar environments and societies in the circumpolar north, four of the five (Basso, Cruikshank, Ridington, Smith) work directly with Athapaskan societies, and all express a worldview that conforms with a phenomenological methodology.

The influential work of Julie Cruikshank (1981, 1990, 2005) and Keith Basso (1984, 1988, 1996a, 1996b) demonstrate that place-making is linked to ways of knowing and the construction of social knowledge through the means of mobility, narrative, and the agency of place. As Basso (1984) has noted, place-name research was popular in the first half of the 20th century when ethnogeography was a common aspect of anthropological inquiry that focused on the role of place names and their connection to issues of territoriality and relationships between groups. However, the study of place names fell out of favour until the early 1980s when both Cruikshank (1981) and Basso (1984) published influential works. Their work suggests that place provides a mnemonic link between storytelling and both historical and moral wisdom that link to identity, a sense of place, and that define relationships between humans, animals, and the landscape and codified in place names. The commonality in their work was significant to other areas where Athapaskan societies existed but also to a broader hunter-gatherer experience as similar research in Australia, Africa, and South America and applications in linguistics, cultural anthropology, and archaeology have demonstrated (Burenhult and Levinson 2008).

Ingold's (2000:253) concept of a 'dwelling perspective,' which he defines as "a perspective that treats the immersion of the organism-person in an environment as an inescapable condition of existence," is based on the broad experiment in phenomenology to understand human consciousness and its relation to the experience of daily life. In a key expression of the dwelling perspective, Ingold (1993) defined it as where "the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of—and testimony to—the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves."[6] More recently, Ingold's (2008) expressions of meshworks, entanglement, boundaries, and wayfaring, describing how organism-persons make their way in the

[6] Recently, Ingold (2008:1808) has indicated a preference for the term *inhabiting* over *dwelling*, noting that the latter 'carries a heavy connotation of snug, well-wrapped localism'. However, given its wide use in the literature the term 'dwelling perspective' will continue to be used here.

landscape, leaving evidence of their passing in a multitude of signs, has also helped frame my understanding of the Dene experience with navigation and trails and the archaeological residues that these activities leave behind. These ideas have helped frame our collaborative research into the temporality of Tłįchǫ mobility and their complex naming system for landscape, trails, and place, helping us to analyse cultural resource inventories of canoe trails which is explored in Chapter 2.

In the Dene worldview, animals, other entities sharing the environment, and even aspects of the landscape itself, are considered sentient and are regarded as persons. This ontological perspective is shared by many northern societies and has been characterized by some as a sentient ecology (Anderson 2000; Ingold 2000). Worldview, as defined by Robert Redfield (as cited in Hallowell 1960:49), is the 'picture the members of a society have of the properties and characters upon their stage of action' and, here, is used interchangeably with ontology, the philosophical study of the nature of being, existence, or reality, or what Smith (1998:412) has called the 'intellections and feelings concerning the nature of being'. I use 'Western' to refer to culture and philosophy of European origin, informed by Cartesian dualism, and the basis of the North American colonial settler experience, recognizing that this has limitations in describing a current Canadian multi-cultural society in a post-colonial setting. The Dene mediate their kinship with animal-persons and other other-than-human persons that they cohabit with through a system of generalized reciprocity where, simply stated, through the gift of respect the gift of flesh is returned. In other words, by respecting an agreed upon set of rules governing respectful conduct by the hunter, the animal-persons will offer themselves as gifts in return. The research of David Smith (1985, 1998, 2002, 2003), working with Denesułine (Chipewyan) people in the Northwest Territories has demonstrated the important connection between the gift relationship the Dene have with animal-persons and how it is key to their way of knowing. As Smith (2002, 2003) notes, the gift of stories are particularly important to relationships between people and Cruikshank (1998, 2005) draws similar conclusions, noting the key role that stories have in constructing local knowledge. These and other themes are explored in Chapter 3.

Ingold (2000) suggests that technical knowledge develops through a process of *enskilment*, where a novice gains a deep awareness of the world through hands-on, practical engagement in technological activities under the guidance of a skilled practitioner. For Ingold (2000:369), artifice is "knowledge of a very personal kind, partly intuitive, largely implicit, and deeply embedded in the particulars of experience." Ridington (1982, 1983, 1994), in a similar way, has argued that for the Dane-zaa, an Athapaskan group inhabiting

northern British Columbia, technology has as much to do with dreaming as with the skills of the physical hunt, where hunting depends on the ability of a hunter to engage in enduring relationships with the animal-persons inhabiting the environment. Through dreaming, the hunter mediates his relationship with animal-persons by visualizing where the trail of the animal and his will intercept. Dreaming, then, becomes an aspect of technology and enskilment. As Ridington (1982, 1983, 1994) suggests, northern Athapaskans value technical knowledge more than material possessions and, therefore, these technologies emphasize artifice over artifact. Dreaming, then, is a key component of *ʔjk'ǫǫ̀*, or 'medicine,' part of a generalized system of reciprocity and used to ensure that one moves through the landscape in a respectful fashion, helping to mediate moments of insecurity, and bearing on every relationship a person may have with all other entities. This idea is explored in Chapter 2 with respect to ethnogeography, in Chapter 3 with respect to relationships with other-than-human persons, in Chapter 4 with respect to the ethnohistory of Tłı̨chǫ trading relationships in the years before First World War, to some extent in examining the ontology of objects in Chapters 5 and 6, and its relationship to grieving in Chapter 7.

"There will be many stories"

I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the theoretical and methodological inspiration I have found in conversations with my many elder Dene companions. The late Paul Wright, chief, philosopher, and gentle human being, frequently spoke about the importance of working with someone closely—doing things as your partner would do them—because only then are you able to 'perceive their wisdom'. Defining, in essence, an interdisciplinary approach, Paul Wright's guidance has been a key aspect of my own research method and one that has lead to numerous many positive learning outcomes. In a similar vein, when I would work with Harry Simpson at his house recording place names on a topographic map, he would refuse to tell me the stories associated with them noting that he would do so only when we were 'there' so that the visual cue of place would help me remember them:

> 'There are many stories about that hill, so when we get there I will tell stories about it. There will be many stories. We'll have to check all the areas mentioned in the story, and we will have to climb to the top of it. When we get to the hill there will be lots of work to be done (Harry Simpson, Gamètì, 1992).'

Though largely focused on objects and their meaning in our lives, projects in museum anthropology provide ways of constructing new narratives about old things. Museums have been characterized as contact zones (Clifford 1997), where interactions between indigenous makers and curators lead to the possibility of both improved relations and the construction of new knowledge about old objects, something that our collaborative teams have experienced when visiting museums in Canada, Russia, United States, and Scotland as part of our cultural revitalization projects. However, I think that this is only a partial picture of the role of museums, one that ignores the importance of taking the museum outside of itself and into the landscapes of the people its collections represent. I think this is what Paul, Harry, and other elders tell us when we work collaboratively with them. This mode of interacting with museums, of travelling and doing things, making things, in traditional ways, while living in your own landscape is one that brings significant learning opportunities for all involved. In many ways, this approach mirrors a traditional pedagogy of learning on the land where, just a few generations ago, children were educated and socialized through the practice of daily life of travel through sentient landscapes, guided by knowledgeable practitioners in their parents and grandparents. This way of knowing, this way of learning, helps democratize the research process by providing a methodological approach that is not overwhelmed by the methods of scientific inquiry but, rather engages people with research objectives in practical ways, themes that are explored in Chapters 5, 6, and 8.

The projects described in this work result primarily from collaborations with Tłįchǫ elders between 1990 and 2006. The Tłįchǫ, one of several Athapaskan or Dene groups in the Northwest Territories, are introduced in the first chapter. However, from time to time comparative material from other Dene societies is introduced to support conclusions or to demonstrate commonality and these groups will be introduced when required. The research described here took place mostly in the bush or barrenlands in the Northwest Territories, led by a generation of Dene elders who were born and raised on the land. Most of the travel described here was by canoe, boat, or snowmobile. Today, jet boats, airplanes, pick-up trucks, and powerful snowmobiles are more common. Since the late 1950s or early 1960s everyone has been born in town and the number of people fully engaged in bush life began to decline soon after. Today, very few people spend their entire lives based in the bush and most young people almost no time there, choosing instead life in town where TVs, iPods, jobs, and store-bought food dominates youth culture as it does elsewhere in North America.

In some ways, then, this work bridges two worlds: One where *ʔik'ǫ̀* and the practical skills needed to survive in the bush dominated and another where the complexities and tensions of modern globalization dominate. The elders recognized that these changes were rapidly taking youth away from the land, so in agreeing to share their knowledge with me, they asked me to pass along what I have learned. I hope that this work accomplishes this at least in a small measure.

Overview

The practice of museum anthropology allows one to focus on many stories at the same time and in the pages that follow we will explore several. Chapter 2 examines the role of mobility in Tłı̨chǫ culture by detailing their geographic naming system. It also looks more broadly at several Dene groups and attempts, for the first time, to quantify the extent of travel by looking at the trails of 5 hunters interviewed by the Dene Mapping Project. Finally, through the lens of portages, the chapter explores the importance Tłı̨chǫ ethnogeography can have for archaeological research. Trails figure prominently in Chapter 3, as well, however, here the intersection of human and animal trails are examined. Animals and other entities, including aspects of the landscape, regarded as sentient and as persons in Dene ontology and these ideas are explored with respect to *ʔik'ǫ̀* or medicine power and reciprocity. *ʔik'ǫ̀* figures prominently in Chapter 4, which documents the life of Bear Lake Chief, a prominent Tłı̨chǫ trading chief who was at the zenith of his authority before the First World War. The chapter explores the social, economic, and political relations between Bear Lake Chief and numerous local, national, and international actors who either lived or visited the region. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the ontology of objects and the practice of cultural revitalization in a museum setting. While Chapter 5 surveys several cultural revitalization projects, looking at how their collaborative nature assisted in making archaeological inferences, Chapter 6 examines one project in detail, the caribou-skin lodge project, focusing on how lessons from collaboration can inform museum practice. Chapter 7 examines the role of grieving in Dene society. A reflective piece inspired by the loss of key friends and collaborators, it is in many ways an aspect of my own experience of grieving. Chapter 8 present my collaboration with artist-printer, Paul Liam Harrison and explores our visualize dialogue in composing new narratives and landscapes from 'field' photographs through screenprinting. Chapter 9 attempts to conclude this storytelling session with some thoughts of what might lie ahead.

Collaboration, acknowledging and appreciating another's epistemology and ontology, surrendering to another's subjectivity while you lose or compartmentalize your own, are ideas that are not new, having been discussed at length in postcolonial, postmodern, and postprocessual writings in every 'ism' the broad field of anthropology has engaged with in recent decades. As a methodological approach in museum anthropology, it provides for rich encounters, textured learning opportunities, respectful and enduring relationships, it empowers equal participation but, most importantly, as Harry Simpson reminds us, it gives us the gift of many stories.

Chapter 2) Tłı̨chǫ Trails, Portages, and the Archaeology of Wayfinding

Introduction

Following ancient routes on their seasonal migration to and from their calving grounds, barren-ground caribou[7] are consummate travellers. The trails, physically inscribed into the earth by countless hooves, are a permanent record of generations of use so prominent that biologists are able to use trampling scars left on spruce roots as a method of determining caribou population fluctuations as far back as the mid-1700s (e.g. Zalatan *et al.* 2006). Tłı̨chǫ hunters have interacted closely with caribou for millennia, positioning themselves with respect to the biannual migrations, intercepting them where human and caribou trails intersect. To be successful in intercepting caribou, hunters needed comprehensive knowledge of caribou behavior, extensive experience and knowledge of their common landscape, command of skills related to hunting and to travel, and an expansive system of trails permitting movement over large areas. In essence, the Tłı̨chǫ need to be as adept as the caribou when travelling.

To be at the place where the human and caribou trails intercept at just the right moment, providing an opportunity for a successful hunt, a hunter needs to behave and move about his environment in a respectful way, for in the Tłı̨chǫ worldview, animals are regarded as persons, are sentient and aware of human intent, and must agree to give themselves to the hunter if the hunt is to be successful. Often hunters would dream of future encounters with animals—where their trails would intersect—and in this way, dreaming was a part of hunting technology (Asch 1989:210; Ridington 1982, 1983, 1994, 1999).[8] As Ridington (1982: 474) notes for the Dane-zaa, or Beaver, an Athapaskan group living in northern British Columbia, their worldview centered on their image of the trail:

> Every sentient being was perceived as existing at a particular point on a trail that could be imagined projecting forward and backward from that point. This projection was accomplished through the use of dreams. Success depended upon being able to make decisions about how best to move in relation to the complex network of trails emerging from the past and merging into the future. Hunters believed that in the dream state they could

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[7] *Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*.

[8] This theme is explored in greater detail in chapter 3, “The Bear’s Dance”.

> resolve a larger pattern of interrelated trails than would be possible in ordinary waking consciousness. In dreams a person could draw upon his or her own personal relationship to the natural world established during the visionary experience of childhood. The power conveyed by that experience was believed to facilitate later dream contact between people and animals.

Trails, used for generations by the Tłįchǫ, allow travel over a vast and textured landscape. Often trails have names allowing a Tłįchǫ hunter to refer to them in speech. Knowledge about them is passed on to youth in narrative and through the practice of travelling them. While travelling along them, the Tłįchǫ prepare for intercepting the trails of the animal-persons that inhabit the landscape and, in this way, caribou and Tłįchǫ trails are entangled and interwoven from millennia of interactions. In several recent articles, Ingold (2005, 2007, 2008, 2010) has suggested that 'to inhabit the world is to live life in the open,' subject to the swirls and eddies of the weather-world, noting that as we move through the weather-world during the daily practice of life, we create trails, or paths, over the undulating, and ever-changing ground, in the process creating a 'meshwork' of interwoven lines, paths, or trails (ibid 2008:1805). Ingold notes that life is lived along these lines and as we negotiate our way—improvising as we go, interacting with other entities whose own paths entangle with ours—we generate a "process of thinking and knowing" and, in this way "knowledge is formed along paths of movement in the weather-world" (2010: S121). In this way "inhabitants are wayfarers: they move through the world rather than across [it] … and their knowledge … grows *along* the paths they take" (Ingold 2010:S134; emphasis his). It is through movement that we experience and create places, occurring as 'stations' along the life paths of beings-in-the-world (Ingold 2008:1808). He draws a distinction between tracks—occurring from the movement of one or a few—and paths, representing the cumulative impression of the footprints of many people often leading to the formation of a furrow in the earth (Ingold 2010). In the Tłįchǫ vernacular, the word for footprints—*gokeèk'e*—also means 'track' and is akin to Ingold's use of the term. The Tłįchǫ have two words—*etǫ* and *tı̨li*—meaning path, trail, or road, though 'trail' is the most common translation. *Tı̨li* is a larger, more significant trail and often the word is used to describe paved roads and highways as well.

If, as Ingold contends, places are formed through movement, I can think of no better illustration of this than a portage. In the Tłįchǫ environment portages are constrictions along the entangled meshwork of summer canoe trails, where tracks become paths so

heavily used they are physically inscribed into the earth. They are a place where all human wayfarers come ashore to walk from one water body to another, and in the process leave impressions of their combined activities behind. Visited again and again, generation after generation, and tied directly to oral tradition through the recounting of stories that reside 'in place,' their temporality is bound to the dynamics of the formation processes that create them and in this way, they conform to what Schlanger (1992) has termed 'persistent places,' places that are "used repeatedly during long term occupation of a region". Thus, portages hold tremendous potential for archaeological reconstruction of past lifeways.

As part of a 'way of knowing,' Tłįchǫ movement along trails is guided by a familiarity and knowledge of the local environment, encoded in trails, place names, and stories and, in this way, aspects of their knowledge are mapped by the landscape they inhabit. In wayfinding, or "knowing as you go," Tłįchǫ use their familiarity and the ever changing texture of the weather-world to guide them (see Ingold 2000: 237-241). This chapter attempts to explore the meshwork of trails, part of the Tłįchǫ system of wayfinding, by unraveling a single trail and examining a locus of entanglement—a portage—a persistent place where humans converge in their travels. After presenting a brief overview of the Tłįchǫ and their environment, I will follow with a summary of Tłįchǫ ethnogeography, and then a more extensive examination of their system of travel, including a discussion of the spatial extent of travel. Based on results from collaborative cultural resource inventory projects undertaken in partnership with Tłįchǫ participants focused on two traditional canoe trails—the *ʔįdaàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè* trails[9]—I will complete this section with an examination of the archaeology and anatomy of portages. In the discussion, I will explore the role of Tłįchǫ mobility and wayfinding in archaeological site formation in the Northwest Territories.

The Tłįchǫ

The Tłįchǫ, or Dogrib, are an Athapaskan-speaking group of Dene or Northern Athapaskans who inhabit an area of nearly 295,000 square kms, located between Great Slave and Great Bear lakes in the Northwest Territories of Canada. They are one of several Athapaskan groups occupying the Northwest Territories of Canada. The other groups include the Gwich'in, Kashogot'ine (Hare), Sahtuot'ine (Sahtu Dene), Shúhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene), Slavey, Yellowknives, and Denesułine (Chipewyan). June Helm (1981:292)

[9] Aspects of this research have been described in Andrews (2004), Andrews and Buggey (2008), Andrews and Zoe (1997, 1998, 2007) and in Andrews, Zoe and Herter (1998, 2007).

has identified 6 regional groups which comprise the Tłı̨chǫ Nation. These include the Tahga Got'ı̨ı̨[10] ('Follow the Shore People'), Tsǫtì Got'ı̨ı̨ ('Filth Lake People'), Dechı̨laa Got'ı̨ı̨ ('Edge of the Woods People'), Et'aat'ı̨ı̨ ('People Next to Another People), Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨ ('Bear Lake People'), and the Woòleedeè Got'ı̨ı̨, ('Inconnu River People'). Today the Tłı̨chǫ comprise a total population of more than 3,000 people who reside principally in four communities: Gamètì (formerly Rae Lakes), Wekweetì (formerly Snare Lake), Whatì (formerly Lac La Martre), and Behchok'ǫ̀ (formerly Rae-Edzo). Some Tłı̨chǫ families have moved to the territorial capital, Yellowknife, to find employment or to live with relations. The Tłı̨chǫ negotiated a comprehensive self-government and land claim with the federal and territorial governments that they signed in 2003. Since then the Tłı̨chǫ Government has been implementing the many provisions of the claim, invoking the authority of self-governing powers according to a schedule they have set. See Helm (1972, 1981, 1994, 2000), Helm and Gillespie (1981), and Helm and Lurie (1961) for detailed descriptions of Tłı̨chǫ ethnography and ethnohistory.

The central portion of the Tłı̨chǫ landscape is typical of the Canadian Shield. The vegetation is dominated by trees of the taiga or boreal forest,[11] soils are poorly developed and thinly distributed, and the pervasive, exposed bedrock is fretted with numerous lakes varying dramatically in size. To the west, the Bear and Slave Uplands predominate, characterized by dense boreal forest, growing on soil and glacial till to depths of several metres in some locations. Lakes are less numerous and bedrock is exposed only rarely. Toward the northeastern edge of Tłı̨chǫ lands, the spruce trees thin to give way to the barrenlands, or tundra, characterized by low-growing, shrubby and herbaceous plants characteristic of the low Arctic ecozone. Subsistence was traditionally derived (as it is today) from barrenland and woodland caribou, moose, small game such as beaver, muskrat, hare, ptarmigan and grouse, and from a variety of fish and migratory waterfowl. Caribou and fish are of prime importance. Trapping, an important economic pursuit for centuries after the arrival of Europeans, has been in decline for several decades. In recent years, fur prices have risen in response to use of furs in the fashion industry and almost every community in the Mackenzie valley has a few people making most of their living from trapping.

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[10] All Tłı̨chǫ words are presented using the practical orthography of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories.

[11] The taiga is dominated by conifers (larch, pine, white and black spruce), though deciduous trees are also common and include birch, alder, willow, and poplar.

Distance Travelled

Few accounts documenting the extent and nature of Tłı̨chǫ or other Dene mobility have been published. Though a detailed investigation is beyond the scope of this chapter, in this section I present a brief analysis of five Dene hunters whose trails were documented for the Dene Nation's land claim negotiations of the 1980s and 90s. These data were collected by the Dene Mapping Project, which surveyed over 600 hunters and trappers from 26 communities (approximately a 30% sample of all hunter/trappers) with the intent of demonstrating maximum areal extent of traditional land use (see Figure 1).[12] The resulting area demonstrated Dene land use over 1.17 million square kilometers (Asch, Andrews and Smith 1986). Hunters were asked to record just their own 'living memory' of trail use and though a few of them were born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, most of the trail record pertains to the 20th century (up to 1982), a time of rapid and escalating change. Significantly, dramatic changes in travel technology also occurred during this time with the adoption of snow machines starting in the 1970s. Evidence from the Dene Mapping Project showed that snow machines, because of their need for fuel and propensity to break down, had an overall limiting effect on travel. Snow machines require fuel and, for travelling great distances, provision to cache fuel along the route, both expensive propositions for a hunter or trapper. In early historic times, dog teams—introduced by the fur trade—were the primary winter travel method, and canoes or boats were used during summer throughout. Dogs could be fed entirely on fish and, with nets and ice chisels easily available through trade, catching them at any season was made easier, leading to an increase in the number of dogs used by families. Dogs could go wherever there were fish to feed them. Prior to the fur trade, historical accounts, particularly early ones such as Hearne (1911), suggest that though canoes were sometimes constructed, they were not used to travel vast distances and, instead, the Dene walked most everywhere in all seasons. The use of walking trails persisted into the 20th century despite the increased use of dogs and canoes and a more sedentary life centered on villages beginning in the mid-1950s. For example, Kashogot'ine people walked along a summer trail that linked the trading post in Fort Good Hope with the caribou hunting and fishing areas of Colville Lake. Similarly, Shúhtagot'ine used dog packs to carry essential household goods into the mountains on an annual basis (see Andrews *et al.*, in press). In precontact times, oral tradition suggests that people walked, employing snowshoes and human traction to pull animal skin sleds in winter, and employed dog packs to carry some loads at all times of the year (cf. Honigmann 1964:46).

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[12] I served as manager of the Dene Mapping Project from 1980 to 1984 and as its Director from 1985 to 1989 and the information provided here is from my personal experience and memories.

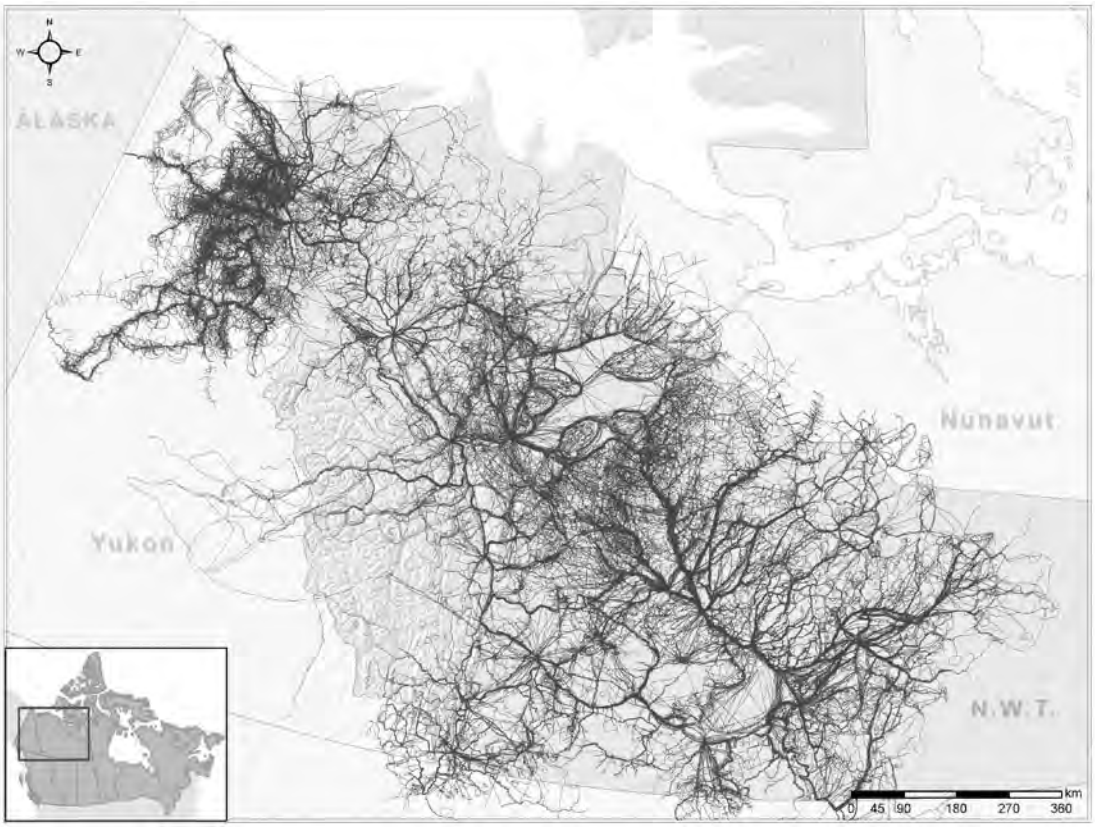

Figure 1: Dene Mapping Project trails for 600 trapper/hunters interviewed by the Dene Nation in the 1970s and 1980s. Used with permission of the Dene Nation.

To obtain a sense of distances and areas involved in Dene subsistence practice, I examined Dene Mapping Project trails of one hunter from each of the Gwich'in, Kashogot'ine, Shúhtagot'ine, Slavey, and Tłı̨chǫ areas, choosing individuals whose land-use extent appeared, on visual inspection, to be average for the region yet representational of the area used by the community. In this way, excessively large or small trail networks were excluded. To estimate area based on trails, Geographic Information System software was employed to generate a conservative buffered area for each hunter. The resulting tabulated and mapped data are displayed in Figure 2.[13]

[13] I am grateful for the assistance of Amy Barker with the GIS analysis and for producing for the maps for this chapter.

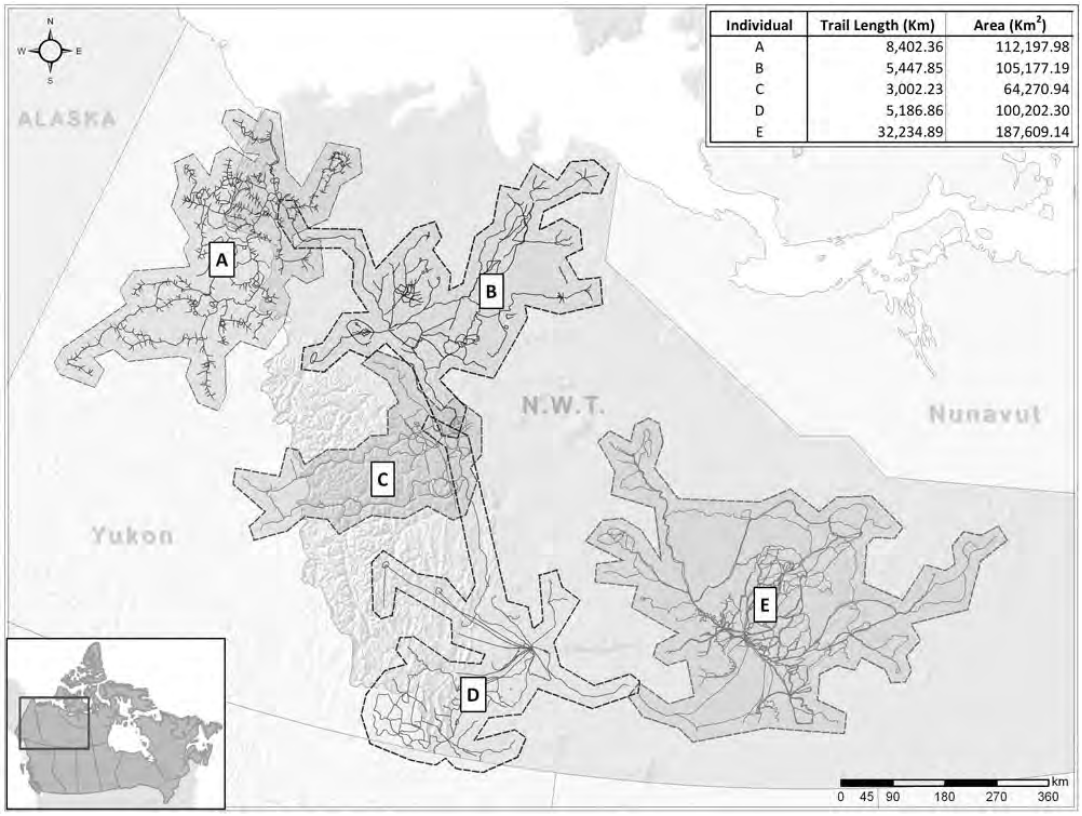

Figure 2: Trails of 5 Dene Hunters, showing trail length (Km) and area (Km^2) (used with permission of the Dene Nation).

Ranging in size from 64,270 to 187,609 square kilometers, it is visually obvious that Dene hunters traversed vast distances in the daily pursuit of living in subarctic environs. In terms of linear distance, the numbers are equally impressive, ranging from 3,002 to 32,234 km. To some extent, differences in the size and extent of the traditional use areas reflect differences in local topography, travel technology, and subsistence practice, though a complete analysis of the reasons for the differences is beyond the scope of this chapter. For example, Kashogot'ine (B) and Tłįchǫ (E) hunters travel vast distances following migratory herds of caribou, which can travel 600 kms or more from wintering grounds to their calving area. The Tłįchǫ (E) hunter's trails also represent extensive dog team travel to the tundra in pursuit of musk-ox hunting, an important pursuit until 1917 when the trade in musk-ox robes was made illegal. White fox trapping, was an important economic pursuit from the 1920s to 70s. In contrast, the Shúhtagot'ine hunter (C), seeks mountain woodland caribou which migrate distances of approximately 100 kms from winter grounds in the lower forested mountain valleys to calving areas in the high alpine tundra (cf. Andrews *et al.*, in press). Longer travel from Tulita (formerly Fort Norman), located in the Mackenzie River

valley, to trading posts or spring beaver hunting areas in the Yukon, along with the east and west flowing rivers from the Continental Divide, contribute to the east-west linearity of the Shúhtagot'ine trail system. Traditionally, the Gwich'in hunter (A) followed the Peel River drainage to caribou and sheep hunting areas in the uplands, front ranges, and alpine areas of the Richardson and Ogilvie Mountains. With a surge upward in the price of muskrat pelts during the First World War, the rich Mackenzie Delta became a more important location for trappers and spring land use was reoriented to spend more time there. Similarly, when marten fur prices jumped significantly during the Second World War, trappers reoriented their focus to the uplands up the Peel River, ideal habitat for this species (Slobodin 1962:36-40). For Slavey hunters (D), caribou and sheep hunting areas in the southern Selwyn Mountains, along with rich trapping and moose hunting areas in the Mackenzie lowlands on either side of the Liard River provided a diverse environment for subsistence.

What the map and tabulated data do not demonstrate—and there is no way to extract this from the Dene Mapping Project data—is to what extent or frequency the trails were used by an individual over a lifetime of travel. Honigmann (1964: 46) distinguishes between two patterns of mobility: groups of people moving with their belongings seasonally to various locations, and more local mobility, where men or women travel from camp to hunt, check nets, snares or traps, collect firewood, related activities. Given that travel was a *daily* activity, over the course of a lifetime the accumulated distance travelled was many times the linear distance of the trail systems provided in the table. For a Tłı̨chǫ hunter, fall travel to the tundra to intercept caribou on their southward migration might require canoe travel over return distances of 800 kms. Returning to the tundra by dog team for winter and spring trapping—sometimes with returns to the trading post at Christmas and Easter to observe religious holidays and refresh supplies—might mean travel distances of 1600 to 3200 kms over the winter and early spring. Caribou hunting on their winter grounds in the boreal forest in March might add another 300 to 400 kms. Canoe travel to areas close to a home community for the annual beaver, muskrat, and waterfowl hunting season might add 100 kms or more, as might travel during the summer for fishing and moose hunting. An average of over 3000 kms travelled on an annual basis would be a conservative estimate, and even this does not account for the travel associated with Honigmann's 'local mobility'. Multiplied by the life of the hunter, it would be fair to say that the Tłı̨chǫ are the very definition of mobility, a statement easily extended to all NWT Dene in traditional times.

Tłı̨chǫ Wayfinding

The Tłı̨chǫ have an intimate relationship with the landscape. Their knowledge about the topography, distribution of game, and linkages with Tłı̨chǫ history and culture is extensive. The landscape is codified at a variety of levels with place names, and in most instances these names are associated with narratives that relate knowledge pertinent to the rules and moral codes of society, history and mythology, worldview, kinship, relationships with neighboring groups, relations with other-than-human persons, resources and their distribution, and other aspects of society, culture, and environment. The Tłı̨chǫ mobility ethos dictates that those who travel widely, and experience a wide variety of interactions with other people, other-than-human persons, events, and places achieve an elevated status and are regarded as knowledgeable or wise and are accorded great respect.[14] Thus, extensive travel and mobility is central to the Tłı̨chǫ way of knowing, for it is through travel, while engaged in the daily practice of life, that youth are educated and socialized in Tłı̨chǫ culture. In this way, by travelling with skilled practitioners over a storied landscape, acquiring skills through embodied practice, while using the mnemonic cue of places encountered to remember the stories associated with them, movement becomes a didactic experience for young Tłı̨chǫ. Individuals continue to learn through their bodily movements and encounters with others in the landscape, and with the passage of time and after much travel, may gain the status of a learned elder.

Being able to describe clearly where you are, where you have been, and where you are going are essential for success and survival and this knowledge must be able to be shared easily with others in the social group engaged in similar tasks. Consequently, young people were sometimes tested with respect to travel knowledge (see Basso 1972 for an example related to travel on ice). Working with Tłı̨chǫ elder Harry Simpson on cultural resource inventory projects focused on canoe trails, he would sometimes suggest a direction of travel and ask me to recite the Tłı̨chǫ names of major lakes along the trail in geographical order, smiling broadly when I was able to do so without error. Also, he frequently told us that "The old people used to say "You're not an elder until you know your trails and landmarks," a statement that captures both the value of travel-related knowledge and its role in procuring the status of being regarded as a knowledgeable, respected elder.[15]

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[14] For comments on mobility for other northern Dene see Slobodin 1962:84; Savishinsky 1974:120; Nelson 1973:274, 1983:216ff; Heine *et al.,* 2001:31-40.

[15] Andrews, Fieldnotes, 26 July 2004.

The Tłı̨chǫ employ a complex wayfinding to codify their landscape, and use this both in discourse and to guide travel. Starting with the broadest descriptive levels and moving to the most specific, the framework below outlines that system. The Tłı̨chǫ use terms to distinguish a variety of divisions of the Tłı̨chǫ cultural landscape, where each place is embedded within a hierarchy of landscape description and meaning. In this way, Tłı̨chǫ wayfinding uses named landscape units, trails, and individual place names that populate the trails in codifying the physical and cultural landscape (cf. Kari 1989, 1996; Saxon *et al.* 2002).

Tłı̨chǫ Landscape Units

The Tłı̨chǫ recognize nine broad regions or landscape units (see Figure 3), each reflecting a specific meaning in terms of expected topographical, ecological, biogeographical, and cultural conditions. Though these landscape units overlap to some degree with physiographic and ecological regions defined in Western geography and ecology, the added cultural dimension defies easy labelling within the framework of these constructs. The Tłı̨chǫ landscape is 'known' through individual travel, through oral narrative and myths, and through kinship and political affiliations with neighbouring groups and other-than-human persons.

Landscape units are often open-ended—without boundaries—to the north and south, as these areas were beyond the direct experience and 'knowing' of Tłı̨chǫ travellers.[16] As one travels from one to the next, sometimes a physiographic change marks the transition between landscape units. These can be precise or gradual; for example, the sharp 65 metre drop from *Nǫdìì* to *ʔı̨daà*, marked by waterfalls and precipitous cliffs, or the more gradual 65 metre rise between *Hozìi and Hozìideè,* both requiring long, arduous portages in summer. Most often, a combination of cultural and ecological conditions help define units and in this way they serve to also convey knowledge (see Table 1). For example, hunters travelling to *Hozìideè* (big barrenlands) would know to carry wood with them, to expect potentially dangerous encounters with grizzly bears or Inuit, long, arduous portages, and be prepared for sudden storms in any season. Historically, Tłı̨chǫ hunters travelled to this area only in spring[17] for hunting musk-ox, in the fall for caribou hunting, and in the winter (only during

[16] I will discuss the issue of boundaries with respect to place names below.

[17] This took place between approximately 1875 and 1917, when the trade in musk-ox robes was made illegal by federal legislation (Barr 1991). See Chapter 4 for further discussion of this hunt.

Unit Name	Cultural Characterization
Yambahtì	Glosses as 'big water'; visited on rare occasions and usually in special circumstances (e.g. men travelling to a coastal trading post); regarded as territory of the Xoteèdà ('always winter people' or Inuit) who may be encountered at any time. Wood must be carried from treeline.
Hozìideè	Glosses as 'big barrens', and refers to the region devoid of trees and characterized by only low shrubby vegetation; caribou are hunted during late summer and fall; historically musk ox and white fox were important economic species; typically known only by Tłı̨chǫ men who travel on logistical forays to hunt or trap. Contact with Inuit expected, and was relatively frequent in historic times. Wood must be carried from treeline.
Hozìi	Glosses as 'barrens', referring to that area just beyond the tree line, well within Tłı̨chǫ traditional use area, and characterized by low growing dwarf shrubs and herbaceous plants and rare patches of stunted trees; caribou are common in late summer and fall; historically musk ox and white fox were important economic species and were taken in spring and winter respectively; most frequented by men who travel on logistical forays, though groups sometimes included women on fall caribou hunts. Occasional contact with Inuit expected in some seasons, and occurred relatively frequently in historic times. Wood must be carried from treeline.
Dechı̨̀ilaa	Glosses as 'the edge of the trees' and is characterized by a patchwork of trees growing in low Arctic vegetation dominated by dwarf birch. Caribou are numerous during spring and fall migration; widely and thinly distributed in winter. Lakes are rich with fish, especially whitefish and lake trout. Migratory waterfowl common in season. Moose are rare. Considered home range of the Dechı̨laat'ı̨̀, ('Edge of the Woods People').
Ɩkwę̀	Glosses as 'towards the barrens'; a broad band of open boreal forest and corresponds to the Canadian Shield, with large expanses of exposed bedrock, numerous clear lakes abundant with lake trout and whitefish. Considered part of the caribou winter grounds, and barrenland caribou are common in winter. Moose are also an important species.
ʔı̨daà	Glosses as 'the way ahead' or as 'up this way' and refers to the central corridor of access to the Tłı̨chǫ̀ homeland. A single trail, referred to as *ʔı̨daàtı̨̀li*, marks the region. Many tributary trails are accessed by it. The ecosystem is similar to *Ɩkwę̀*, though vegetation becomes denser toward southern end. Considered home range of the Sahtì Gòt'ı̨̀ ('Bear Lake People') and Et'aat'ı̨̀ ('People next to another People') Tłı̨chǫ regional bands.
Nǫdìi	Glosses as 'plateau' or 'upland' and is characterized by greater soil deposition, fewer lakes and meandering rivers. Boreal species dominate and vegetation is denser. Woodland caribou and moose are important subsistence species, as are whitefish, and lake trout. Included important trapping areas in historic times. Considered home range of the Ts'ǫ̀tìt'ı̨̀ (Lac LaMartre People).
Dehchoga	Glosses as 'big river valley' and refers to the Mackenzie River valley, homeland of a variety of Slavey bands, and sometimes the birthplace of many men and women who have married into Tłı̨chǫ society. Considered the home territory of the Denaat'ı̨̀ (Slavey).
Shideè	Glosses as 'high mountains'. Considered the home of the Shihtat'ı̨̀ or Mountain Dene. Rarely visited by Tłı̨chǫ, but known through extraordinary travel and through exogamous marriage of Mountain Dene into Tłı̨chǫ society.

Table 1: Cultural Characterization of Tłı̨chǫ Landscape Units.

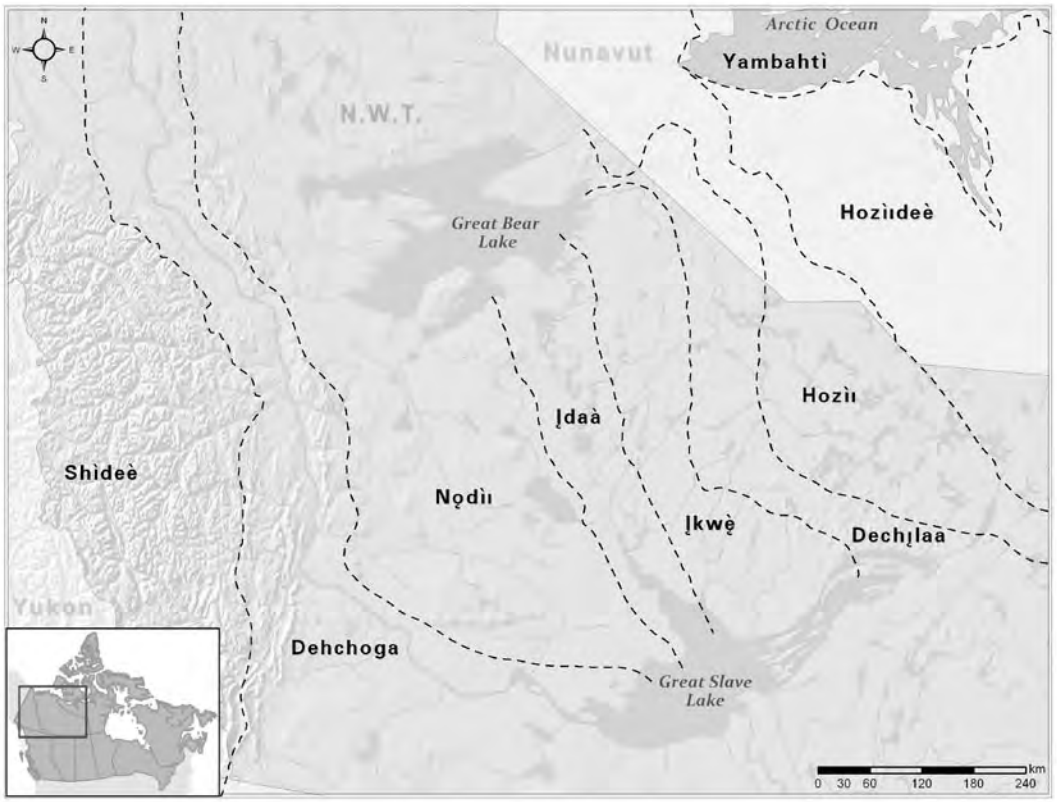

Figure 3: Tłı̨chǫ Landscape Units.

the 19th and 20th centuries) to trap white fox, wolverine, and wolf for trade. Summer travel to the barrenlands was rare. Similarly, the unit *Shideè*, rarely if ever visited by Tłı̨chǫ hunters, was known to be the home of the Shúhtagot'ine, a neighbouring group encountered during trade at Fort Norman (today known as Tulita) and with which numerous kinship links existed through the practice of exogamous marriage. *Dehchoga* ('along the big river') is the homeland of the *Denaat'ı̨ı̨*, or Slavey, and though it would only be visited irregularly in recent decades, historically Tłı̨chǫ traded at both Forts Simpson and Norman, so have a lengthy experience with this area (Krech 1984). *ʔı̨daà* ('the way ahead') and *Įkwę̀* ('towards the barrenlands') are areas where wood is plentiful, where a traveller might encounter Tłı̨chǫ relatives, where fish and moose are numerous, and where barren ground caribou can be found in winter. *Nǫdìi* ('plateau'), is densely wooded, but a rich place for woodland boreal caribou, moose, and fish. Occasionally, the winter range migratory barren-ground caribou extends this far south. *Dechįlaa* ('edge of the trees') is also an area where one might expect to encounter relatives, but the trees thin here, giving way to the tundra, and caribou are seen in great numbers twice a year on their migration. Wolves, recognized

as efficient hunters by the Tłı̨chǫ, also position themselves with respect to caribou by denning along the treeline in *Dechı̨laa* and are encountered frequently (Heard and Williams 1992).

Trails as Geographic Descriptors

A dendritic network of traditional trails crosses and connects these landscape units imparting both metaphorical and physical linkages between them (see Figure 4). All major trails are named, with the name typically denoting either the destination or a major named

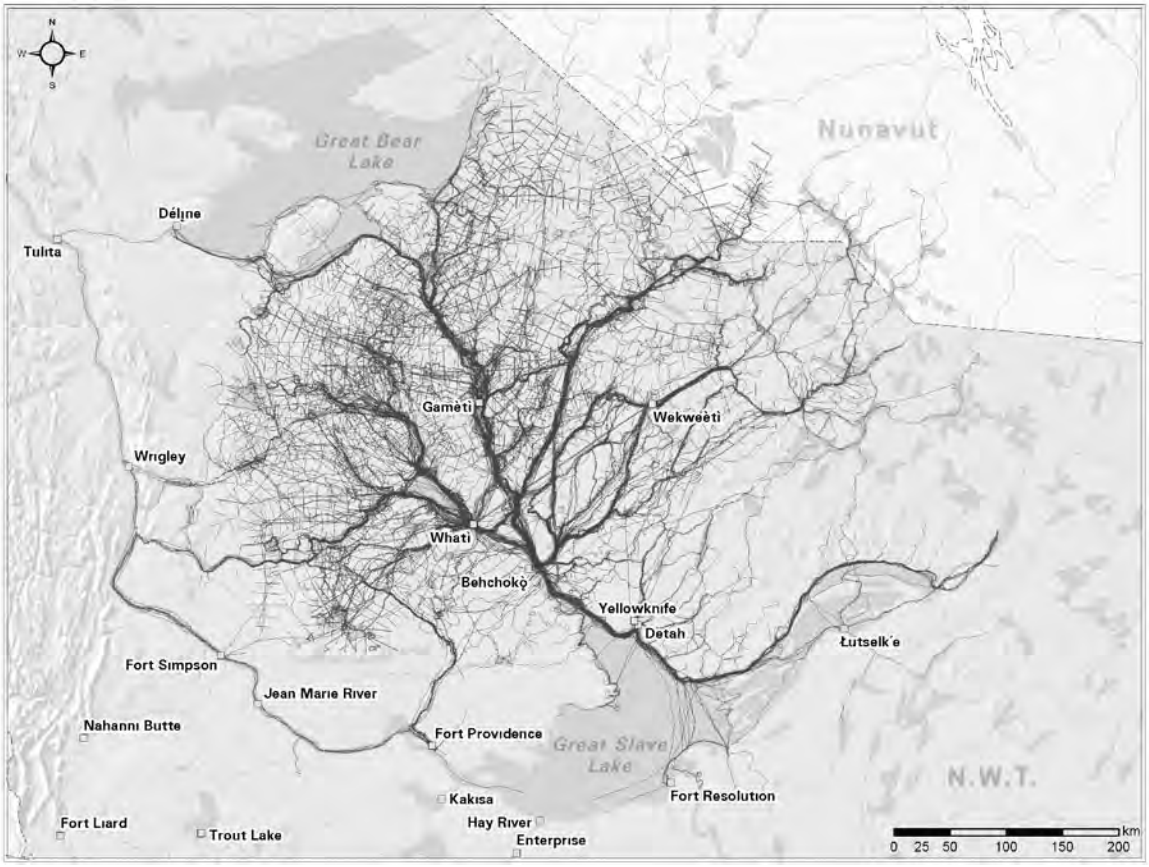

Figure 4: Tłı̨chǫ Traditional Trails (used with permission of the Dene Nation).

feature along the route. As with names for other features, trail names are often associated with specific narratives or myths (see for example the discussion of myths, sacred sites, and trails in Andrews, Zoe, and Herter 1998). Trails are tangible artefacts of Tłı̨chǫ wayfaring and provide a physical structure to the cultural landscape. They are often visible as well worn footpaths, leading many elders to reflect on this as evidence of generations of use by their

ancestors. Thus, with their persistence through time, trails constitute archaeological sites in their own right.

Often, a trail has two expressions and, like a double helix, one entangles the other. Summer routes, follow open water with land-based portages linking water bodies: Winter routes follow roughly the same course, though cutting corners whenever possible. Unlike summer routes, winter routes uniformly exist on either snow or ice and a complex lexicon exists for describing various surface conditions.[18]

ʔjdaàtʇli, or the Idaa trail, serves as the central or trunk road, linking Great Slave and Great Bear lakes and providing access to a multitude of tributary trails and a land-use area in excess of 250,000 square kilometres. In summer, the trail has 25 named portages between the two great lakes, the longest of which is a kilometre in length. Only at the portages is the trail visible, where landings are subtly marked with tree blazes or cut stumps and the walking trail itself is often a worn footpath.[19] The winter dog team trail entwines the summer route, shortening the overall distance by cutting corners while, like the summer trail, avoiding rapids and other swift moving water where ice conditions might be dangerous. The dog team trail is frequently visible, even during summer, as a narrow, linear clearing, where shrubs and trees have been kept at bay by frequent travel. Working with elders in landscapes that hadn't experienced much travel since people moved into town in the 1950s, or since snowmobile travel had reduced distances, they often noted 'things looked different' because trails and campsites had grown over, sometimes making them hard to find. When the trails were used regularly, vegetation was constantly kept at bay through the direct impact of travellers running them over, but also from use as trees, which were constantly being cut for tent poles, drying frames, firewood etc. The trails themselves are archaeological sites as the physical evidence of their use is preserved in the compaction of the soil. However, they are always associated with a plethora of other evidence of human use in the form of hearths, cut stumps, tree blazes, graves, small middens, dog houses, fish caches, drying racks, conical lodge poles leaning against trees, stone circles, and innumerable other examples of the jetsam of travel scattered along them. As such they have proven to be remarkable windows into the past (Andrews and Zoe 1997).

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[18] See Basso (1972) and Andrews *et al.* (in press) for examples and a discussion of these terms and their use in Shúhtagot'ine wayfinding.

[19] Other details of portages are discussed below.

For the Tłı̨chǫ, the trails are a record of the interactions between themselves and the animal-persons, other-than-human persons, and enspirited components of the landscape they share their environment with.[20] These other-than-human persons are regarded as sentient and leave evidence of their movement in the form of trails which intertwine with human trails through their interactions (Ridington 1982). Travelling by canoe in the summer, elders begin everyday with a short prayer during which they ask for safe travel, good weather, and for the gift of food. Though the prayer is offered in a format prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church, the intended audience includes not only God, but also the pantheon of mostly invisible other-than-human persons that might be concerned with the presence of these humans in their proximity and, as such, the Tłı̨chǫ have syncretised an ancient spirituality with a more recently introduced one. During the prayer, people are expected to face the direction of travel, as a way of 'looking to our future', as one elder described it.[21]

The Role of Place names

Named places are distributed along trails like beads on a string. Travel across the Tłı̨chǫ landscape can be easily and clearly described by reference to these names and indeed travel narratives often appear to be no more than long lists of place names. Place names are culturally intensive linguistic phenomena that bring ancient knowledge forward embedded in their grammar, terminology, definitions, and implied meanings. These same principles can also apply to the names of landscape units and trails, creating a rich naming system providing travellers with a powerful capacity to describe precisely where they have been or intend to go. Names and narratives convey knowledge, and in this way Tłı̨chǫ culture is tied directly to the landscape.

Saxon *et al.* (2002) and others have elucidated several organizing principles of Tłı̨chǫ place names that demonstrate the complex relationship between culture, place, and time.[22] Though Tłı̨chǫ place names are most often descriptive of some quality of the environment,

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[20] See the next chapter for details on animal-persons and other-than-human persons in Dene worldview.

[21] The relationship between body position and time is briefly explored in chapter 7.

[22] The Tłı̨chǫ Government (formerly the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council) has undertaken extensive research in inventorying and documenting the nature and scope of traditional place names (see Legat, 1998; Legat *et al.*, 1999, 2001; Saxon *et al.,* 2002). My purpose here is only to build upon this excellent research base as a complete analysis of Tłı̨chǫ toponymic practice is well beyond the scope of this chapter.

they sometimes reflect metaphorical inferences and include references to specific events, activities, individuals, history, and landmarks. Most often, however, they are descriptive of the land or resources and consequently convey knowledge specific to aspects of subsistence.

Many place names contain reference words for generic topographic or hydrographic features, such as esker (*what'àa*), lake (*tì*), river (*deh*, *deè*), narrows (*dįjka*), or hill (*shìh*), which can be combined and used in conversation and in place names to provide a level of detail necessary to convey an implied meaning or to refine the location of a specific referent. For example, the word *kwekà*, or 'flat rock', is a common component of many place names, particularly portages or other places people walk over. Though the name refers to a flat rock outcrop it also implies these places represent easy walking conditions when dry but treacherous when wet because the lichens covering the rock will be soft from the rain and extremely slippery. However, the word *kwe* can imply other meanings. *Kwedoò*, or 'blood rock', a place located on *ʔįdaàtįli* where an important and ultimately violent event linked to the Tłįchǫ culture-hero, *Yamǫǫ̀zha*, is also the location of a critical toolstone quarry.[23] Discovery of the toolstone quarry during an archaeological examination of the area led Tłįchǫ elder Harry Simpson to conclude that the name—'blood rock'—referred not to the violence associated with the event that took place there, but rather to the colour of the stone. Harry Simpson's analysis led to the discovery of four other toolstone quarries where the Tłįchǫ place name had preserved some 'knowledge' of the properties of the stone found at the place (Andrews and Zoe, 1997).

Other terms denote ecological or biological qualities. For example the term *whagweè*, often glossed as 'sandy place' is actually a reference to a particular ecotype characterized by a lichen ground cover (most commonly *Cladonia sp, Cladina sp., Cetraria sp., Flavocentraria sp.,* and *Stereocaulan sp.*), dominated by spruce or pine (*Picea sp.* and *Pinus sp.*) trees, growing on a well-drained sandy soil. This open, park-like ecotype is common in the Tłįchǫ landscape and though they are pleasant to walk through in the summer, hunters are aware that they are often sought out by caribou in winter as the lichen substrate is a critical food source and the open conditions make it easier for them to crater down through the snow to obtain it. The name serves to convey information about the

[23] Tłįchǫ travellers perform a geomantic ritual at *Kwedoò*. The hill is believed to be the skull of a giant old man and filled with water. Visitors throw a stone into a crack at the top of the skull/hill listening for the sound of it falling. Hearing the sound augurs a good fortune (Andrews, Zoe, and Herter 1998). This is discussed in further detail in chapter 5.

vegetation *and* that it is a critical winter habitat for caribou. Another example is the Tłı̨chǫ word *edaà*, meaning 'alive' or 'living there', though it is also sometimes glossed as 'crossing' (Saxon *et al.* 2002). In my experience, this word is associated with three other-than-human persons: moose, caribou, and spruce trees. When associated with caribou it is often used to describe places where they swim across narrows or from points of land jutting into lakes to the nearby shoreline—places where hunters often intercepted them in canoes. With moose—sometimes combining *edaà* with the word for moose, *golǫ,* to form *golǫdaà*—it almost always refers to a salt lick where moose tracks can be found in the hundreds, concentrated in an area of only a few square metres.[24] Sometimes the word is associated with the word for spruce, *ts'i*, to give *Ts'iedaà*, or 'spruce lives'. I have documented at least three places with this name, all known as the last location on a trail where you can collect firewood or tent poles when crossing *Dechı̨laa* on your way to the tundra. In short, *edaà* is a place 'alive' with other-than-human persons, specifically moose, caribou or spruce trees, and where their trails and those of humans intersect.

Place names also frequently refer to the flow or some quality of water. The word *echǐı̨lı̨ı̨* glosses as 'outflow of a lake'; modified slightly it becomes *ehchilii*, or 'summer fish run', referring usually to the run of whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*). Saxon *et al.* (2002:29) note that the root word for *echǐı̨lı̨ı̨* translates directly as 'tail-flowing', perhaps a metaphorical reference to the fish runs that also occur at these places. Place-name rules for flowing and standing water can differ dramatically from Western practice. For example, in Tłı̨chǫ practice it is common for flowing water to take the name of the standing water it flows from. In other words, rivers take the name of the lake they flow from.[25] In Western practice the Marian River, forming part of the *ʔı̨daà* trail, consists of a river flowing south from a watershed divide about halfway between Great Bear and Great Slave lakes into Great Slave Lake. Along its flow, a number of significant widenings are referred to as lakes and given separate names. In Tłı̨chǫ practice, there is not a single river, but rather a series of rivers flowing out of the various lakes along the route of flow. By breaking the longer river into discrete named units, Tłı̨chǫ travellers are provided with an improved capacity to describe specific locations.

Most importantly place names are almost always associated with stories which are said to reside with the place. Elders often use the metaphor that the 'land is like a book,' in

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[24] Shúhtagot'ine have an almost identical term that means 'salt lick' (Andrews *et al.*, in press).

[25] Like naming rules in Western geography, there are numerous exceptions.

explaining this relationship, meaning that stories and places co-exist (Andrews 2004). In this way, places function as mnemonic devices ordering a variety of narratives, which transmit and preserve culturally-relevant information, a feature common too many Athapaskan societies (see, for example, Andrews 1990; Andrews and Zoe 1997; Basso 1996a; Cruikshank 1990, 1998; Kritsch and Andre 1997). An example of this is *Kweyìiʔeɬets'aadzìi*, a small island of rounded, glacially-smoothed bedrock protruding from a lake, about the size of a small, one-storey house and resembling a giant beaver lodge shattered into several large pieces. According to the associated story, long ago people sought shelter in this 'beaver lodge' to escape enemies who managed to break it open, killing the occupants.[26] Eventually, it all turned to stone and today, the shattered rocks are ringed with a thick band of bright red lichen (*Xanthoria elegans*) clinging to the rocks just above the water level, said to be evidence of the blood from the murdered occupants. Travellers passing by are reminded of the story by the shape of the small rock island and are required to stop and leave small votive offerings for the occupants still enshrined in the stone.

From the perspective of Tłı̨chǫ cosmology, culture and landscape are inseparable, as stories are tethered to their physical context. Thus, place anchors narrative, linking the orator to the physical landscape, where the visual, mnemonic role of 'place' aids both the telling and learning of stories. Since anyone listening to a place-story has likely travelled there and seen it for themselves, they are easily transported to the location in their own imaginings, able to feel the action or emotion of the story based on their own embodied experience of the place. Consequently, Tłı̨chǫ toponymic practice is partly metaphorical in nature, and consists of mapping narrative prose onto the landscape, and as such can be regarded as a tenet of Tłı̨chǫ wayfinding. During place-name recording sessions in his home community in advance of undertaking ethnoarchaeological research on the *ʔı̨daà* trail, Harry Simpson would often allude to stories associated with the various names, leading me to inquire about them. However, each time he would ask me to be patient and wait until we were at the actual location, noting that if he told me the stories in advance of actually seeing the place I would 'never remember them'.

The landscape unit names provide a framework for labeling broad regions and as discrete categories permit the repeated use of other geographic or feature descriptors within them. For example, lakes known as excellent sources of whitefish, are often known

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[26] See Saxon *et al.* (2002:123) for another version of the story of *Kweyìiʔeɬets'aadzìi*.

simply as *łiwetì* or 'whitefish lake.' However, in normal conversation, confusion as to which particular fish lake is being referred is avoided by first making reference to the landscape unit. This can be further refined by referring to the trail on which the lake is found and to the lakes on either side of the reference lake. Consequently conversations about locations consistently refer to place, trail, and regional names to ensure that the proper geographic location is inferred. Further positional detail can be provided by using terms for direction (both cardinal and positional) as well as a rich lexicon of generic landform descriptors.

Portages in Canadian and Tłı̨chǫ Worldviews

As anyone who has canoed in the Canadian north knows, rivers of the Canadian Shield are replete with portages and, due largely to the effort required in traversing them, they often live in infamy in a canoeist's memory. In the history of the north, especially in the annals of the fur trade, portages or 'carrying places' were a critical part of the trade infrastructure and have been a focus of much narrative related to travel (see Morse 1969; Hodgins 1999). They have been the subject of historical research (e.g. Birk 1994), and for underwater archaeologists they have frequently been a rewarding focus of study (e.g. Lockery 1978). Hodgins (1999: 239) has suggested that they serve as "a metaphor for Canada and its people," noting that our history was carried on the backs of voyageurs across portages, knitting a national identity from the far flung reaches of the Canadian landscape. More rarely have they been examined within the context of Aboriginal history and culture (though see Macdonald 1985).

For the Tłı̨chǫ, portages are important foci of both action and narrative. Nearly all major portages have names, and they are often related to other sites including camps, storage areas, and graves, themselves all artefacts of a mobile culture. In the context of Tłı̨chǫ mobility, portages figure prominently in summer travel throughout the region, serving as nodes in the tangled meshwork of trails that provide access to the local environment. Portages have significant social value: in one sense, they are a step to somewhere else, a place along the way, but they are also a meeting place where the paths of many people entangle at a single locus and, thus, in a sense become a metaphor for travel itself

Tłı̨chǫ Portages and Mobility in Historic Times

As both physical elements of trails, and places with names, portages hold a unique position within the context of Tłı̨chǫ wayfinding. Used repeatedly over time, they are 'persistent places' (Schlanger 1992:97) and, consequently, present great potential for

archaeological research. The use of portages varied depending on water levels, weather conditions, composition and size of the travelling party, purpose of travel, volume of supplies being moved, and ultimate destination. Many of these variables were determined to a large extent by the seasonal round. The Tłı̨chǫ seasonal round has been described in detail by Helm (1972, 1981) and Helm and Lurie (1961).

During the fur trade period, several summer events required long distance travel and extensive use of portages. Following break-up, widely dispersed families would travel to the trading post at Fort Rae to refresh supplies and to trade furs accumulated during the winter trapping season and spring beaver and muskrat hunts. According to elders' accounts these trips were much anticipated and related families following a single trading chief[27] would meet at a predetermined 'rendezvous' and travel to the post as a large group (referred to as 'brigades' by Russell 1898). Canoes were made or repaired as necessary *en route*, and sometimes, due to the size of the party, portages caused delays as the group took turns crossing it.

In summer the Tłı̨chǫ would move to subsistence fisheries usually located within a few days travel of the trading post, where they would remain for the balance of the summer. In late summer or early fall the men and boys would begin preparations for the long trip to the barrenlands for the summer/fall caribou hunt, where they would attempt to intercept the southward migration of the Bathurst caribou herd. A variety of trails were used for this purpose. Typically women, children, and the aged would be left behind at a fishing lake located within the tree line, though occasionally would accompany the men. Frank Russell (1898), a naturalist collecting specimens on behalf of the University of Iowa, encountered many such parties during his nearly two years of travel through the Tłı̨chǫ region in 1893-94. In July of 1893 Russell left old Fort Rae and travelled east to ascend the Yellowknife River. At Tartan Rapids, he encountered a large group of Yellowknives[28] who were just leaving for the late summer caribou hunt. As Russell (1898: 74-5) notes the group was very large, and many were involved in manufacturing canoes as they waited a turn to cross the portage:

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[27] The role of trading chiefs is discussed in chapter 4.

[28] The Yellowknives were a neighbouring group to the Tłı̨chǫ and spoke a dialect of Denesułine. The Yellowknives and Tłı̨chǫ followed very similar practices in regards to the fall caribou hunt, and Russell's description serves well-enough in place of one specific to the Tłı̨chǫ. The Yellowknives used different primary routes to the barrenlands, though these rivers were known to the Tłı̨chǫ, as were the Tłı̨chǫ routes to the Yellowknives.

> "… This was the rendezvous of Little Crapeau's brigade of Yellow Knives. About fifty had already arrived and were encamped on the grassy slope below the gorge, through which the noisy stream finds its way from the lake. They were busily engaged in building canoes for the inland journey to the caribou. The lake canoes were drawn out and left bottom up, in the shade of the trees, where they would remain until required the following spring to transport furs to Resolution.[29]
>
> Having obtained a few directions … we crossed the portage of a hundred yards, on the right of the rapids, and launched the canoes upon Prospect Lake. The Yellowknife River is simply a chain of lakes connected by rapids and falls."

Russell (1898:77) continued several miles up the Yellowknife River, and on his return journey a day later he encountered the same group, this time encamped on Prosperous Lake (Russell's 'Prospect' Lake) just north of the Tartan Rapids. The description conveys much about travelling conditions, activities undertaken en route, and the state of portage camps following abandonment:

> "Another day's paddling brought us to Prospect Lake, where we found the Indians scattered along the whole length of the west shore. Only a few could use the portage path above their old camp at one time, so that they had been all day getting under way. There were sixty canoes in all; some of them were new, some were old but patched with bright new pieces of bark, some were without the bark deck and seemed so old and fragile that one involuntarily looked to see how far the occupant would have to swim to reach the shore.
>
> The men had lighter loads than the women. They paddled about in the bays after waterfowl. Shotguns were used, though wounded birds were often

[29] 'Resolution' refers to the HBC post at Fort Resolution located on the southern shore of Great Slave Lake, and the principle trading locale for the Yellowknives. The Tłı̨chǫ, and the neighbouring Yellowknives, used two forms of birchbark canoes: a larger freighter canoe, measuring 20 to 30 feet in length, and a smaller hunting canoe which measured 11 to 15 feet in length. See Andrews and Zoe (1998) for a discussion of these types.

> killed with steel-pointed arrows. Nearly every canoe contained two or three dogs, which were poor and thin, and naturally of inferior size, so that they added little to the load. The canoes contained a heterogeneous collection of muskemoots [bags of woven babiche], blankets, nets, lodges and other personal property. An occasional clean blanket or a powder keg indicated that a recent visit had been made by the owner to Resolution. They had been given a large amount of 'debt' and had an abundance of tea, tobacco, and ammunition…
>
> We camped on the portage near the deserted camp, the lodge poles of which remained standing. All property not required upon the hunt had been cached on tripods of long poles, the lower half of which had been peeled to prevent the carcajous [wolverines] from climbing them. An abandoned Indian camp is not an attractive spot with its smoke-begrimmed skeletons of former lodges, its rags, heaps of hair, ashes, bones and trampled pine-tops."

The summer/fall caribou hunt of the Tłįchǫ necessitated travel over great distances, sometimes in excess of 800 km (return distance), and often requiring over 100 portages. Though the returning canoes were loaded with bales of dried caribou meat, these downstream trips were made quickly, as families waiting at the fish camps would be anxious for the safety of their hunters. Though these trips were sometimes arduous, stories of them focus more on the joys of travel rather than the difficulty of it.

Once the hunters had returned to the fish camps, a final trip would be made to the trading post to obtain supplies for the coming winter, and to trade meat. After the trading had been completed, families and smaller groups would disperse to winter trapping and hunting areas, travelling distances sometimes in excess of 400 km. These trips were made very late in the open water season, and often ice forming on water courses necessitated leaving the canoes, and continuing by dog team (see Andrews and Zoe 1997: 168-70 for an example of this).

Links between Narrative and Portages

Clearly, portages are an essential component of the technology of travel, however, they also are important in terms of social values. As places with names they serve to help order Tłįchǫ narrative and many portages are linked to specific stories. In September 1986, I

had an opportunity to travel for two days with a group of Tłı̨chǫ families by boat from Rae to Whatì (formerly Lac la Martre).[30] Though there are several small rapids requiring arduous portaging of heavy boats, outboard motors, fuel, food and camping supplies, many hands completed these difficult tasks quickly and efficiently, allowing easy boat travel to continue as soon as possible. One of the portages climbs nearly 5 kilometres over a steep falls, called *Nailı̨j*, which drops nearly 50 metres to the Lac La Martre River below, marking the transition between landscape units *Nǫdii* and *ʔı̨daà* and the boundary between the Mackenzie Uplands and the Canadian Shield in Western geography. The falls are also a significant sacred site, related to a story of raiding in the early fur trade and a place where, following the courageous actions of a Tłı̨chǫ elder, many enemies of the Tłı̨chǫ met their death. Today, visitors climb to the edge of the falls and throw an offering into the falls and wait to interpret the immediate environmental response: Seeing a rainbow in the spray of the falls augurs good luck while its absence or the presence of fog augurs a bad one. To facilitate easy travel boats are often left at the base of the falls, ready for the return journey, and travellers will pre-arrange to have boats travel from Whatì to pick them up at the top of the falls, as we did on this occasion.

The portage was known well to the older people travelling with us as many of them had been employed as youth hauling supplies over it to the trading post at Whatì. The portage trail itself was clearly visible as a worn footpath making it easy to follow despite the thick spruce forest cover. Because of its length the portage was associated with four camps, two located at either 'landing', and two placed equidistant along the portage route serving as rest places and occasionally as overnight camps. Our group was diverse. Comprising about 25 people it consisted of 3 nuclear families and several unrelated males of varying ages, most of who were travelling to a land claims meeting in Whatì. The weather was good, biting insects few, and ample fish and small game provided a welcome break from store-bought food.

As we carried our personal gear over the portage, it became obvious that the packsacks of two of the young, single men contained alcohol, evidenced by the regular 'clinking' of the contents. Emboldened, perhaps, by an absence of rebuke, they were frequently overheard to be discussing the drinking and gambling they hoped to instigate

[30] This trip was previously described in Andrews (1990).

upon arrival at Whatì. It seemed that no one was much concerned for the young men's behaviour and, as a result, they continued to brag about their party plans.

At the insistence of two of the elders we stopped at both of the rest places to hear stories about travelling over the portage in the old days. Sitting in the grassy clearing of the first rest camp we all sat or lounged on the ground, organized in a tight group so that we could hear the elders speak. They told of how in the old days the work was very hard and these rest camps were important as they helped break the task of carrying heavy loads into manageable stages. Sometimes the men were hired by local traders or stores to pack supplies over the portage. Once they had to take apart a diesel tractor in Rae, transport it piece-by-piece up the river and over the portage, reassembling it in Whatì. Many of the stories related events that occurred in the landing or rest camps along the route. The elders began to tell stories that took place at these rest stops related to excessive gambling. In one of these stories, the protagonists, enriched from their gambling activities, lost control and became 'crazy for gambling,' ultimately losing all of their money in the process. Unable to stop gambling, they continued betting parts of their hunting outfits and eventually some of their clothes, losing all in the process. Recognizing that to leave these men without their clothes and hunting outfits might lead to their death, the others participating in the game agreed to return these items, but only after humiliating them by making the two men climb trees without clothing and sing to each other like birds.

At the conclusion of this very funny story all of us were deep in laughter. However, the two young men with the alcohol had withdrawn to the fringes of the group and were looking very sombre, indeed. For the rest of the trip they were subdued, quiet, and no longer boastful. This striking change in behaviour was attributable to the elders' choosing a story of excessive gambling intentionally—from the many stories linked to that place—as a form of public rebuke.

Keith Basso (1984, 1996a) describes a similar phenomenon in Western Apache culture. As with Tłı̨chǫ and other Dene, the Western Apache,[31] use place as a mnemonic device to order and recall specific narratives which reside at the named place and in a fashion similar to the Tłı̨chǫ they use these stories to correct inappropriate behaviour. However, unlike the Tłı̨chǫ, or other Dene, they use the place names as a kind of shorthand

[31] The Western Apache are one of the Southern Athapaskan groups, related to the Dene by language and a common ancestry. Though the timing is subject to controversy, Southern Athapaskans are thought to have left a northern homeland following a volcanic eruption about 1100 years ago and migrated to their current location in the US southwest.

to invoke the message contained within the associated story. In a situation similar to the one described above an Apache elder could simply utter the name of the place, even though it might be miles away, and it alone would cause the young men to think of the story and its message, creating the same reaction that we witnessed at the portage rest camp. Basso (1984) notes that Western Apache elders use an archery metaphor, noting that the name enters you 'like an arrow,' carrying with it the intended message. In this way elders can 'stalk with stories'. Since both Western Apache and Tłı̨chǫ are Athapaskan languages, the parallels between their practices of instructing with place-based stories are significant.

The *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and Hozìideè Portage Sites

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, portages have a significant presence in Tłı̨chǫ history social practice and oral culture. However, what expression do they have in the archaeological record and how can the practice of portaging help our interpretation of archaeological sites? This section explores the practice of portaging today and in living memory and how it informed the practice of archaeology while undertaking the *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè* cultural resource inventory projects.

Working in partnership with Tłı̨chǫ elders and youth between the years 1990 and 1994, we investigated two Tłı̨chǫ traditional trails: *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* (translates as "up this way" or "the trail beyond") which links Great Slave and Great Bear lakes via the Camsell and Marian Rivers, and *Hozìideè* (or "great barrenlands"), which follows the Emile River, a tributary to the Marian River, and a major route to caribou hunting and trapping areas on the barrenlands. During the course of this research we traversed 43 named portages, recording the archaeological resources associated with them (Figure 5). Though many elders and youth participated in the project over the years, my primary partners were elder Harry Simpson and co-researcher/interpreter John B. Zoe, who participated in all aspects of the research. Indeed, my knowledge of Tłı̨chǫ wayfinding relies extensively on the patient teachings of Harry Simpson.[32]

The field program of the *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè* cultural resource inventory projects involved visiting cultural sites by canoe during the summer, providing an opportunity to

[32] My relationship with Harry Simpson and his significant role in forming my own worldview is explored in chapters 3 and 7.

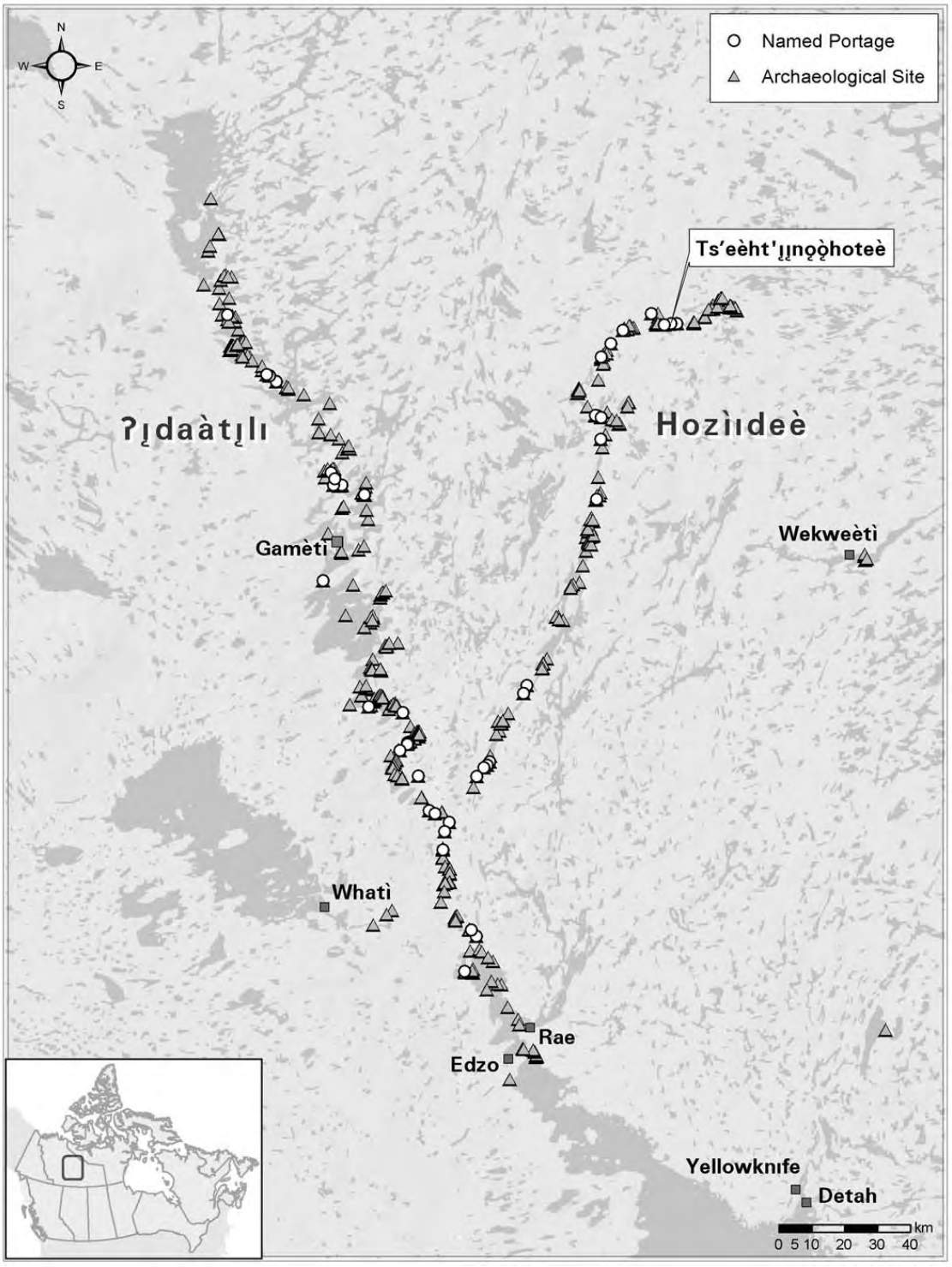

Figure 5: Locations of archaeological sites, showing the location of *Ts'eèht'jjnǫǫ̀hoteè* and locations of other named portages on the *ʔjdaàtįli* and *Hozìideè* trails.

search for archaeological sites but also to learn through direct participation in the Tłı̨chǫ practice of portaging.[33] In order to prepare for summer fieldwork, named places associated with travel, legend, or subsistence activities were first identified on topographic maps during winter community interview sessions with elders. During the summer fieldwork, elders and youth would accompany the project team while each of these places were visited, providing further information regarding the sites visited as well as logistical support through hunting and fishing. Over the course of four years we recorded 430 new archaeological sites along the two trails; 281 sites for *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and 148 for *Hozìideè*. During the canoe trips we crossed a total of 65 portages, of which a total of 43 were named and subsequently identified as archaeological sites (25 sites for *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and 18 for *Hozìideè*), representing approximately 10% of the total number of sites recorded (Andrews and Zoe, 1997, 1998, 2007; Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998, 2007).

In Tłı̨chǫ practice, almost all rapids were portaged, especially if travellers were in canoes. Boat travel has decreased the use of portages to some degree, especially upstream, where the power of the motor is sufficient to push the boat through the rapids. More recently, jet boats are becoming widely used resulting in a further decline in the use of portages as the draught of jet boats is such that even shallow rapids can be run. Many rivers in the region, especially those in the Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake drainages are characteristic of Canadian Shield Rivers where long, large lakes are separated by short, fast flowing stretches of river, replete with rapids, ledges, and falls, requiring many portages. Portages are so numerous on some rivers they are avoided entirely during summer travel. For example, when examining a Dene Mapping Project map of regional trails I noted that the Snare River was only lightly used in summer and asked Tłı̨chǫ elder Alexis Arrowmaker why, and his abrupt response—"52 portages"—was answer enough. Portages were used frequently during seasonal forays to trade or to hunt caribou and, depending on their length, a series of related sites were often associated with them. Camping or rendezvous locations were common and typically located near either end of the portage. Graves were also commonly associated with them. Since the arrival of Christian missionaries, Tłı̨chǫ graves have typically been burials marked with picket fences and simple wooden crosses. Tłı̨chǫ travellers will usually make an effort to repair grave fences when encountered. When

[33] The research methodology adopted for the projects has been described in Andrews and Zoe 1997.

possible, families preferred to chose burial locations which were near major routes and access points, where they were visible from the trail.[34]

Most portages have names that describe the carrying conditions. Sometimes a single portage has two names because the carrying conditions change dramatically over its length. More rarely the names reflect historical events or cultural activities, describe nearby topographic features, or are named for the length of the carry. For example, the most common category describes the carrying conditions as in *Kwekàahoteè* ('over rocks portage'), *Ts'ook'ehoteè* ('muskeg place portage'), or *Łedzekwehoteè* ('clay place portage'). Much less common are names that refer to important resource activities, mythological creatures such as *Nįhts'ìiyeèhoteè* ('whirlwind portage'), or a historical event such as *ʔehtenagehtį* ('where they put the fish trap in'), or *Sahk'edeè* ('bear place rapids'), marking an historical encounter with a bear. Sometimes names convey information about nearby landmarks as in *Jt'ǫ̀ǫtìhoteè* ('little green leaf lake portage') or *Shiigeehoteè* ('between the hills portage'), while names such as *Hotehcho* ('big portage') carry obvious meanings. The unnamed portages numbered 23 (16 for *ʔįdaàtįli* and 7 for *Hozìideè*) and were usually of insignificant length to warrant a name. Sometimes these portages were used only at extremely low or high water conditions and, therefore, due to their intermittent nature were not named. In other instances, groups of small portages were circumvented by a single longer named portage, and consequently, the shorter ones were not named. See Tables 2 and 3 for a summary of named portages located on the two trails and Figure 5 for their location.

At several portages we found the remains of birchbark canoes, presumably cached for future use, or abandoned because of damage or lateness of season. These were typically found along shorelines of bodies of water, and frequently associated with large camps. Often found in locations densely overgrown with shrubs and sometimes moss, the placement of the canoes might reflect a cultural practice of purposefully leaving canoes in bush when leaving them for any length of time to prevent them from damage from the weather, something elders said was an important consideration for ensuring canoe longevity.[35] Large camps, often named as "landing places" were commonly associated with portages and located at either end. Depending on the time of day, the direction of travel,

[34] Please see chapter 7 for further discussion of this subject.

and the length of the portage, these camps would serve either as temporary rest spots or overnight (or longer) camping locations. Long portages were often divided into sections divided by resting spots which were located along the length in numbers proportional to the length or difficulty of the portage. These locations were repeatedly used year after year (see above and Andrews 1990 for a discussion of one of these). Some of the resting spots were near fresh water springs (see below) and, at some, trees would be limbed and topped to provide a canoe rest.

Long portages typically take advantage of intervening ponds and lakes to provide a break from carrying supplies and a welcome respite from the biting insects which plague many portages. Sometimes travellers have the option of portaging a single, long portage to circumvent a series of shorter portages. Depending on water conditions, however, it is sometimes easier to use the river and cross each of the shorter portages. Depending on water conditions, some portages are navigable downstream only and, at others, canoes can be tracked or walked down the rapids. Sometimes canoes will be unloaded at the head of a portage, and women and children will carry the supplies over while the men pole or line the canoes through the rapids. In instances where canoes run rapids, travellers carefully scout the rapids to ensure they can find a way safely through. The portages themselves are almost always visible as well worn foot paths, and a variety of cut stumps, blazed trees, piled rocks, and other signs, mark their location. Brush is often cut and cleared over the portage, and often older men will walk ahead to do this while the younger men prepare to carry the canoes and supplies. If it was a long or arduous portage, once everything has been carried over sometimes the group would rest and enjoy a light meal before continuing. At other times, especially when a particular destination was planned, the travellers would quickly load the canoes and continue on their way. If the portage resulted in starting travel on a new body of water, each individual in the party would make a quiet offering by throwing something (tobacco, a few coins, some .22 calibre bullets, a garland of leaves and branches taken from nearby vegetation) and asking the indwelling entities occupying the water and landscape for safe travel.[36]

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[35] Canoes, and most other organic items, rarely last longer than 100 years when left on the surface in the Taiga. This estimate is based on canoes dated precisely through oral tradition and recorded historical events (Andrews and Zoe 1997, 1998).

[36] Please see the next chapter, “The Bear’s Dance”, for further details of this practice.

Borden Number	Portage Name	Gloss	Length	Associated Sites:
KfPn-4	*Kweghaɻlɻ̨jhoteè*	Water flowing through rocks portage	500m	KfPn-2,3, 5
KgPn-1	*Behk'òdeè*	Gull cascade	25m	
KgPn-2	*Sahk'eèdeè*	Black bear place cascade	110m	KgPn-3, 9
KhPn-10	*K'iwìitaèlɻ̨jhoteè*	Water flows, birch stand portage	30m	
KiPn-1	*Łèdzèk'ehoteè*	Clay place portage	195m	
KiPn-4	*Whagweèhoteè*	Lichen on sand portage	85m	
KiPn-5	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	35m	
KiPo-3	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	70m	
KjPo-23	*K'ihoteè*	Birch portage	100m	KjPo-22
KjPo-24	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	115m	
KjPo-25	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	90m	
KjPo-26	*ʔehtenagehtɻ̨*	Where they put the fishtrap in	165m	
KjPo-44	*Hoteèniwà*	Portage, be far away	390m	
KkPo-11	*Nǫdìiahoteè*	Small plateau portage	3300m	
KkPp-2	*Whagweèhoteè / Ts'ook'ehoteè*	Lichen on sand/ muskeg place portage	2100m	KkPp-18
LaPq-1	*Ts'ook'edeeghǫɻlɻ̨jhoteè*	Muskeg place, river flows around portage	500m	
LbPp-6	*K'ǫ̀mǫ̀laahoteè*	Grave fences there portage	250m	LbPp-3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
LbPq-4	*Dloatsɻ̨tìhoteè*	Dloa's spirit portage	125m	LbPq-5, 6, 8, 9, 10
LbPq-8	*Ts'ook'ehoteè*	Muskeg place portage	400m	LbPq-4, 9, 10
LbPq-9	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	310m	LbPq-4, 8, 10
LbPq-10	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	250m	LcPq-4, 5, 8,
LdPr-5	*Whagweèhoteè*	Lichen on sand portage	500m	LdPr-6, 7
LdPr-6	*Kwekàak'ehoteè*	Over flat rocks place portage	150m	LdPr-5, 7
LdPr-7	*Ts'ook'ehoteè*	Muskeg place portage	600m	LdPr-5, 6, 8
LePs-6	*Nɻ̨hts'iìyeèhoteè*	Whirlwind portage	2100m	LePs-8, 9

Table 2: Named portages found on *ʔɻ̨daàtɻ̨li.* Borden Numbers are used to designate archaeological sites.

Borden Number	Portage Name	Gloss	Length	Associated Sites:
KjPn-2	*Ɉt'ǫ̀qtìhoteè*	Little green leaf lake portage	190m	
KjPn-3	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	125m	
KjPn-4	*Kwekàahoteè*	Over flat rocks portage	180m	
KjPn-5	*Whagweèhoteè*	Lichen on sand portage	30m	
KkPm-1	*Hotehcho*	Big portage	2200m	
KkPm-2	*Łèdzèk'ehoteè*	Clay place portage	110m	
LbPl-9	*Łigohtiɔechǰjlɉhoteè*	Whitefish, river flows out portage	400m	LbPl-10
LcPl-3	*Shiigeehoteè*	Between the hills portage	700m	LcPl-1, 2
LdPl-10	*Weyìihàak'èehoteè*	A monster is confined within portage	80m	LdPl-9, 11, 12, 13
LdPl-11	*Weyìihàak'èehoteè*	A monster is confined within portage	350m	LdPl-9, 10, 12, 13
LdPl-13	*Wots'iihoteè*	[unknown] portage	450m	LdPl-9, 10, 11, 12
LePk-2	*Ts'eèht'ɉnǫǫhoteè*	See a long way portage	200m	LePk-1, 4, 5
LePk-4	*Ts'eèht'ɉnǫǫhoteè*	See a long way portage	1500m	LePk-2, 3, 5
LePk-5	*Ts'eèht'ɉnǫǫhoteè*	See a long way portage	1700m	LePk-2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11
LePk-18	*Whagweèhoteè*	Lichen on sand portage	450m	
LePl-3	*Whagweèhoteè*	Lichen on sand portage	125m	LePl-2
LePl-4	*Ts'ook'ehoteè*	Muskeg place portage	1600m	LePl-5
LePl-9	*Tikwootìdagòèɔàahoteè*	Yellow water lake landing portage	150m	LePl-7, 8, 10

Table 3: Named portages found on *Hozìideè.*

In some instances, carrying large freighter canoes[37] over short portages was assisted by log ladders, with the rungs lashed or nailed together, laid on the ground along which a canoe may be slid. Today, modern aluminum boats are slid over the ladders. Where these devices are used regularly they are maintained year after year, replaced as necessary. In places where portages are exceedingly wet, poles are cut to provide a corduroy road to facilitate easier walking. Where portages co-existed with subsistence fisheries, log fish caches were constructed. These would be stocked during the fall whitefish run, the fish being used for dog food during the winter. Today this type of fish cache is no longer constructed as snow machines have replaced dog teams as the primary mode of winter travel. In spring when advancing warm weather had melted much of the snow from the land, but solid lake ice still allowed dog team travel, a small sled was used to support a canoe and dragged behind the dog team. In this way canoes would be at hand when the ice began to break. A wide variety of other structures are regularly found near portages. These include deadfalls which were constructed near fish caches and camps to protect food and other resources from marauding animals and the remains of temporary habitations and related features such as lodge poles and rings, brush shelters, and hearths. These sites, as described by Russell (1898) above, can range for some distance on either side of a portage.

Anatomy of a Portage: Ts'eèht'ı̨ı̨nǫǫ̀hoteè

Of the 65 portages recorded during the field program of the *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè* cultural resource inventory projects, *Ts'eèht'ı̨ı̨nǫǫ̀hoteè* ("see a far way portage") serves as an example of the range and diversity of features and related sites associated with portages. The portage traverses the physiographic boundary between the *Dechı̨laa* landscape unit (Emile River valley), and the higher plain of the *Hozìi* landscape unit (barrenlands), and played a unique role in Tłı̨chǫ history being directly associated with the story of the peace negotiated in the 1820s between the Tłı̨chǫ chief Edzo and Akaitcho, the Yellowknife Dene chief. Covering a distance of 6.1 km, two small intervening lakes, and an elevation gain of 67 metres, the portage is an arduous traverse, linking the Emile River valley in the west to Mesa Lake, and routes to the barrenlands, to the east (see Figure 6). 'Landings' at either end are the location of major camps, and surface evidence (e.g. stone hearths, cans, shoes, etc.) of activity in the last century is common. The landing at the eastern end is also the site of an

[37] Today, these same ladders are used to slide larger and heavier aluminum boats over portages.

old grave, constructed in a style that is no longer used. The grave is so old that no one remembers who is buried there. There are three land legs, with two intervening ponds comprising the portage. All three of the land legs are marked with well worn paths and cut stumps and other evidence of use is common. All three have been designated as archaeological sites (from east to west: LePk-2, 4, 5). The middle land leg has a well-known waterhole, a place known as *Tìwǫkǫ̀*, where portagers would stop to rest and drink the cool

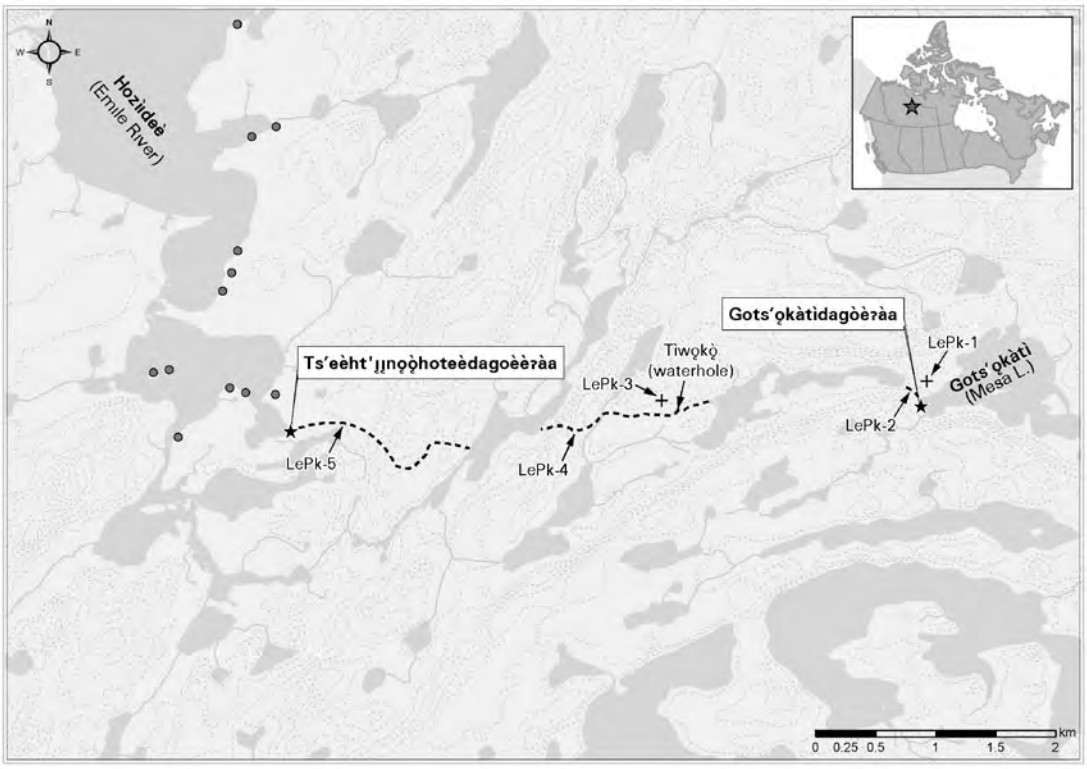

Figure 6: *Ts'eèht'ıı̨nǫǫ̀hoteè* and associated archaeological sites (identified by Borden numbers or dark grey dots).

water. A second grave is also found near the waterhole and, in keeping with Tłı̨chǫ burial custom, is easily visible from the trail and rest spot. The western leg (LePk-5) is the longest and presents the greatest variability in elevation as the portage drops about 65 metres from a high ridge to the Emile River valley below. About a third of the way along the portage (when moving east to west) the crest of the ridge provides a commanding view of the vast forested river valley below. It is from this location that the portage takes its name.

Archaeological Sites and Ts'eèht'ɉɳǫǫ̀hoteè

A total of twenty-one archaeological sites are located within five kilometres of the portage. Including the portage itself, eleven are located within one kilometre. These eleven sites (LePk-1 to 11) include burials, campsites, a water hole, remains of birchbark canoes, and important historical sites linked to travel over the portage, and together serve to illustrate the range and varied nature of archaeological deposits associated with portages:

LePk-1 (burial)

This site is a single grave of an old woman whose name elders can no longer remember. According to oral tradition the grave dates to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. A single square nail noted in the grave pickets would support this. The pickets are constructed from heavy poles and timbers, and are atypical for usual grave fence surrounds.

LePk-2 (portage; campsite)

The site designates the eastern leg of three land traverses on the portage between *Gots'ǫkatì* ("cloudberry lake"; official name is Mesa Lake) and the Emile River drainage. The portage is 210 metres long and traverses gently rolling ground, predominantly over bedrock and the trail is well worn and easy to follow. A traditional landing and camping spot, called *Gots'ǫkatìdagòeɂàà* ("cloudberry lake landing") located where the trail intersects Mesa Lake, is strewn with evidence of recent use of the portage, including barrels, axe-cut wood, and a rubber boot. Important camping spots associated with portages are usually called "landings" and take their name from the lake of departure, or the portage itself.

LePk-3 (burial)

A single grave of a woman named ʔedaà (Toby Kochillea's first wife) dating to approximately 1924, is located here. The grave is marked by a light picket fence and was in fairly good repair in 1994. The grave is located about 100 metres north of the portage trail in glacial till.

LePk-4 (portage; campsite)

This is the middle leg of the portage, approximately 1350 metres long, with steeply rising ground. A very steep hill marks the western end of this portage and the trail is well worn and easily followed. A traditional resting stop near a water hole or natural spring is located near its eastern end. The water seeps into a natural bedrock crevice, and is called *Tìwǫkǫ̀* ("where the water sits"). This leg of the Mesa/Emile portage is the first location where hunters returning from the barrenlands encountered trees, and consequently they would frequently stop here for a day to make a fire to dry meat from caribou hunted at Mesa Lake or beyond.

LePk-5 (portage; campsite)

This is the western leg of the portage, nearly 1700 metres in length and traversing steeply rising ground. A steep hill at the mid-point provides a commanding view of the Emile River valley, and it is for the sweeping view of the Emile River valley at this location that the portage is named. A camping site located where the trail intersects the Emile River and named *Ts'eèht'jı̨nǫǫ̀dagòeɔàà*, or "See a far way landing", shows much evidence of twentieth century use (cut stumps, rusted cans etc). Several lithic scatters of predominantly white quartz flakes were noted in exposures indicating a potentially much older use of the site.

LePk-6 (cultural site)

This small bedrock island is central to the Edzo and Akaitcho peace story and is named *Whagweèhdìa* ("lichen on sand, small island"). During the late 1700s and early 1800s the Yellowknives, a Dene group neighbouring the Tłı̨chǫ to the east, established themselves as middlemen in the fur trade and attempted to control Tłı̨chǫ (and Slavey) access to trading posts in the Great Slave and Great Bear lakes area. Between 1786 and 1829 there were several skirmishes between the two groups, resulting in bloodshed and death. Helm and Gillespie (1981) have written eloquently on the historicity of these events and, in particular, the achievement of peace in 1829 negotiated by Edzo and Akaitcho, at a location on Mesa Lake. Oral tradition tells us that in preparation for confronting Akaitcho, Edzo left his wife hidden under a birchbark covering on this small island, before crossing the portage and establishing a camp on Mesa Lake. Our inspection of the island produced no

obvious physical remains related to this episode, however. Several days later the confrontation took place, resulting in a lasting peace between the two groups. According to Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition the peace was celebrated by two days and nights of dancing so intense that the dancers wore a circle into tundra, said to be still visible today.

LePk-7 (campsite)

On a small wooded but unnamed island, we recorded the remains of a single stone ring (4 metres in diameter), and several axe-cut stumps.

LePk-8 (campsite)

Another small campsite is located near the outflow from Mesa Lake, containing the remains of three collapsed conical lodges. The poles, though badly rotted, were still visible on the surface, as were several large rocks outlining the rings. The area is heavily wooded and numerous axe-cut stumps were noted throughout the site area.

LePk-9 (campsite; canoe storage site)

The remains of four birchbark canoes lie on the surface, partially obscured by the dominant caribou lichen substrate. Three of the canoes were located close together (within 10 metres of each other), and the fourth was located 60 metres to the west of these. Two in the eastern group were too badly deteriorated to determine length. The third was nearly five metres long, indicating that it was likely a freighter canoe. The western canoe was badly broken with wooden parts and birchbark fragments distributed over 40 metres of shoreline. Two three-sided nails with machine-stamped ridges were used to affix a thwart to the gunwale.

LePk-10 (lithic scatter)

A small lithic scatter of white quartz flakes showed in an exposure of a degraded esker deposit. Quartz is the predominant raw material used for stone tool manufacture in the region and speaks to a more ancient use of the local environment.

LePk-11 (campsite; canoe storage site)

The surface remains of a poorly preserved single birchbark canoe in fragments scattered over a distance of 45 metres of shoreline. Length measurements or construction details were impossible to determine due to the state of deterioration.

Discussion

Working with Dene elders in the bush for more than 30 years, there have been many times that I have been the cause of much mirth as they watched me fumbling with large folding paper maps and GPS units in order to *know* where I was. In contrast, the elders I worked with were never lost as they knew almost intuitively where they were. Their knowledge of place is based on personal experience gained through extensive travel over vast landscapes—first with their parents and grandparents showing them the way and, later, through their own practice—and through listening to and, later, recounting the stories of place. The visual mnemonic of landscape helps them remember both the place names and their resident stories. In this way, places are linked by paths, movement along them, and narratives. Using the tremendous descriptive power of their language the Dene have developed a precise system of physiographic reference, part of a complex hierarchical ethnogeography. Although place names mark specific topographic features, they also 'reveal an organization of embedded places' which Frake (1996: 236) has suggested is a universal attribute of place names. Significantly, place names convey knowledge and do so in three primary ways: embedded directly or implied in the grammatical structure or meaning of the words themselves (as in the example of '*edaà* or *Kwedoò*), through associated knowledge, as in the example '*whagweè*,' referring to an entire ecotype and its role as critical caribou habitat, or through the stories associated with them (as in the example of *Kweyìiʔeɬets'aadzìi*), which convey knowledge about Tłįchǫ identity, history, culture, and relations with other persons, including other-than-human persons. Burenhult & Levinson (2008:138-9) have suggested that 'place names are one of the most conservative elements in a language, surviving even repeated language shift,' suggesting that by remaining constant while the home language evolves, place names can preserve ancient knowledge. Harry Simpson was able to use this feature of place names to reconstruct knowledge and locate lithic quarries as a result (see Chapter 5).

Recently the Geographical Names Board of Canada adopted guidelines to 'delineate' place names in order to make use of the analytical power of a computerized geographic

information system, particularly as an aid to understanding Aboriginal naming practices (GNBC 2007). A pragmatic approach to toponyms, it relies on 'local practice,' the contour lines printed on Canadian topographic maps, and sometimes the imposition of 'virtual lines' in determining a place name's spatial extent. However, places are rarely bounded in Tłı̨chǫ worldview, making 'local practice' a rare provider. To understand this, imagine the place name *Beʔaitìʔechǰı̨lı̨ı̨*, or 'the water flowing out of Bea Lake,' referring to the mouth of the river formed at Bea Lake, a small lake on the Marian River. Travelling from the lake to the river in a canoe there would be a point where you might feel that you had left Bea Lake and had entered the mouth of the river—the place called *Beʔatìʔechǰı̨lı̨ı̨*—and a little further down, another location where you might feel that you had left *Beʔatìʔechǰı̨lı̨ı̨* and were now in the river proper, a new place. However, another person, even one in the same canoe as you, might have a different perception of these perceived boundaries. For this reason, Ingold (2000:192) has noted that places do not have boundaries, only centers. However, with some Tłı̨chǫ places, in addition to centers it is possible to denote 'thresholds,' precise locations that mark the transition from one place to the next. For example, arriving at the sacred site *Kwedoò,* one 'has arrived' when you step from the canoe to shore at the base of the hill that comprises the place. In this way, the water/land transition serves as a threshold for *Kwedoò*, though one only available or visible in summer. Walking from the water/land threshold to the center of *Kwedoò,* the location where the ritual is performed, a visitor would retrace her/his steps back to the canoe resting on the water/land threshold when the visit was complete. In this way, *Kwedoò* has no 'back door' as there are no other approaches or ways to leave. In essence, *Kwedoò* is said to comprise the entire hill (representing the old man's skull), in practice it exists as a threshold, a centre, and a path linking them. Significantly, in Tłı̨chǫ ritual practice, the site would only be visited during the open water season so the lack of winter visibility of the threshold—with the land/water transition covered with snow—leaves only the place's center to mark it. To be *at Kwedoò* one must be able to see the features important to the geomantic ritual performed at the site. The threshold, path, and other features are invisible in winter because of the snow cover and, therefore, in some seasons *Kwedoò* has only a centre for though it is not visited at these times, it is always on the mind of Tłı̨chǫ travellers passing by.

Portages have defined thresholds as well, and like the example of *Kwedoò*, ones that are only seasonally visible. Indeed, two water/land transitions mark portages—when you arrive and when you leave—clearly bounding the place in one axis. Having landed and

begun to walk over the portage a visitor could wonder, however, how far the portage extends in the axis perpendicular to the direction of travel—to the traveller's right or left—an experience reminiscent of *Beɔatìʔechǰjlǰj*, above. Contrary to the example of the sacred site above, portages exist as two thresholds linked by a path, but really have no definable 'centre'. Thus, in summer, when these places are visited—in essence the only season when they exist—they are not defined by their centers but, rather, by their paths. Thus, they are defined by movement.

As Russell's (1898) passage above demonstrates portaging can be a complex event when groups of as large as sixty canoes take turns moving over them. While some are portaging, others have set up camp to wait, passing the time making and repairing canoes, all leaving an archaeological record of these activities. Within the context of Tłįchǫ mobility, portages are "persistent places," known and codified in Tłįchǫ wayfinding, used repeatedly over many generations, and typically inter-related with a variety of other places. Archaeological sites are created by people moving from place to place on the ground and though the campsites punctuating their movement are often expressed in the archaeological record, sometimes the record of their movement is also preserved. Thus, portages and trails, can be persistent places, and because of their use through time, hold tremendous potential for archaeological studies of the recent past in the subarctic. Similar approaches have been successfully applied in other Canadian settings including the Arctic (e.g. Stewart *et al.*, 2000; Stewart, Keith and Scottie, 2004; Lyons *et al.* 2010) and the Great Plains (e.g. Oetelaar and Oetelaar 2006), among others. Research into indigenous systems of wayfinding may provide important opportunities for archaeological investigation (e.g. Macdonald 1985; Aporta 2002, 2004, 2005).

Place names convey knowledge that reaches back generations, providing critical clues as to how a landscape was used. When combined with practical knowledge gained through travel with Dene elders while engaged in collaborative research initiatives, archaeologists are given new ways of understanding how Aboriginal societies have interacted with their environments, leading to an improved capacity for locating important 'persistent places'. As an aspect of mobility and land use, an understanding of Tłįchǫ wayfinding can contribute directly to a better understanding of how sites are used interdependently, and as such can aid in the understanding of site patterning on both intra-, and inter-site levels. In the Canadian subarctic, where landscapes and resources have

remained largely stable for many generations, an understanding of patterns of mobility[38] and land use within living memory and experience, may have direct implications in addressing precontact site patterning as well.

Conclusion

Today, the barren-ground caribou still follow their ancient trails to and from their calving grounds. In a sense, Honigmann's (1964) observation about two basic forms of Kaska mobility can be applied to the caribou—a seasonal, long distance movement between the calving and winter ranges, and more local movement on these ranges, for example, while grazing vast sedge meadows or running to escape parasitic flies, somewhat akin to Ingold's (2010) distinction between tracks and paths. Barren-ground caribou mobilities have not changed in millennia, though sometimes the paths have changed as humans construct obstacles—roads, pipelines, mines, communities—in their way. Today, young Tłı̨chǫ hunters still try to find the places where their trails intersect with the trails of the caribou, though, rather than using a canoe or dog team and snowshoes, a young hunter is more likely to rely on a jet boat or snowmobile to get where he wants to go. Often he will be carrying a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver, providing him with real-time georeferencing, rather than relying solely on his knowledge of the changing textures of the environment in wayfinding. As younger generations spend less time on the land and the more they rely on modern spatial positioning technologies, the less they will learn through movement. Ultimately, this change in mobilities has lead Tłı̨chǫ elders to worry that the wayfinding and survival skills of their ancestors is being lost. From a different perspective however, with different mobilities come different archaeologies and documenting the changes in the context of ethnographic and ethnoarchaeological research will be important (cf. Aporta and Higgs, 2005).

For Tłı̨chǫ elders, travel is a way of life, carried out along named trails linking named places, all occurring within a known and named landscape. To inhabit is to be in motion. Through their movement along these trails the Tłı̨chǫ interact with numerous other-than-human persons whose trails entwine with theirs. At various points these trails intersect and it is at these places that an animal-person may choose to give itself to a respectful hunter. In this way, both humans and caribou are wayfarers. As Ingold (2010:S121) has noted

[38] As has been admirably demonstrated by Ives (1990) an examination of social mobility, marriage, and kinship can enable the development of testable hypotheses for interpreting the archaeological record.

"…wayfarers walk at once in the air and on the ground. This walking is itself a process of thinking and knowing. Thus knowledge is formed along paths of movement in the weather-world." For the Tłı̨chǫ, travel is a critical component of a way of knowing, where knowledge is gained with each footstep. By walking during the day and dream-travelling during the night while following their *ʔı̨kʼǫ̀ǫ̀*, the Tłı̨chǫ are the very essence of movement.[39]

[39] These themes are explored in the next chapter, "The Bear's Dance".

Chapter 3: The Bear's Dance: Animals and Others in Dene Worldview[40]

Introduction

On a warm July day in 1999, following several brief rain showers, a double rainbow formed over Daring Lake, visible in vivid glory from camp. It inspired elders Harry and Elise Simpson to provide those of us nearby the following lesson in Tłı̨chǫ ontology: [41]

> "A rainbow, *k'àlemjı̨* ['spider's web'], is like the colours captured in a drop of dew on a spider web early in the morning. A rainbow, especially a double one, is a sign of good weather to come, as the rainbow draws all bad things into itself, like a web does. When an elder sees a rainbow they say "*Massì, massì, ehtsèe k'àle, massì*" [Thank you, thank you grandfather spider, thank you].
>
> When we say this, we are thanking the spider for his hard work as it will be his net which will draw in the bad weather. He is called grandfather out of respect because his early evening rainbow is set like a grandfather might set a fish net once camp had been made, as a leisurely evening activity."

Aside from the beautiful metaphor captured in likening a rainbow to the spectrum of light refracted through the prism of a drop of dew clinging to a spider's web, the story reveals a unique relationship between humans, animals, and atmospheric phenomena that differs markedly from a Western perspective. The story suggests that insects and rainbows are conscious, animate entities able to understand human speech while, apparently, having agency over some aspects of human well-being. In stark contrast, an aspect of the Western worldview holds to an ancient opposition between humans and animals that promotes humans' mastery over animals and their environs. This worldview holds that humans are sentient, self-aware, civilized, and capable of rationality and sentience, features that define what constitutes a "person." Animals are seen to live in a wild state and, because they have less developed brains, survive through instinctual behavior and learn through habituation, imitation, and imprinting, and are not capable of rational thought, complex social structure,

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[40] An abridged version of this chapter has been submitted for publication in Parlee B, Caine K, Manseau M, Simmons D, editors, Rethinking Caribou: The Social-Ecological Complexity of Community-Caribou relations in Canada's Western Arctic. University of Alberta Press.

[41] The story is from Andrews (Fieldnotes, July 27, 1999, pp. 26-7).

language, advanced communication, or use of complex tools. That we have domesticated some animals is regarded as a kind of proof, confirming both our mastery and higher intelligence. This view, based largely on the Cartesian dualism of civilized versus wild, instructs us not to anthropomorphize animals, thereby helping to ensure that the opposition is perpetuated by not allowing us to extend the category of 'person' to animals.[42]

Anyone who has marveled at the ingenious behavior of ravens, whose playful, intelligent actions, coupled with a vast array of complex vocalizations, must have questioned this aspect of the Western worldview. Those of us encultured within a European or North American settler tradition and who have lived with a dog will look upon the rigidity of this human/animal dualism with suspicion, for our dogs often demonstrate intelligence, self-awareness, ability to reason, humour, compassion, and trust. For these reasons, it is common for pet owners to regard their pets as persons and to extend fictive kin terms to them—brother, sister, son, daughter—and, thereby, envelop them in the social structure of our families (Tannen 2004). It is in this crack in our ontological ideal, this pragmatic, on-the-ground lived view of the relationship between humans and animals, that the Western worldview finds common ground with a Dene one.[43] For in Dene ontology, all animals, along with a great number of other-than-human entities, both corporeal and incorporeal, are considered persons. These other-than-human-persons are regarded as having the same characteristics as human-persons in that they are sentient, self-aware, have wisdom, the ability to communicate among and between species, and have life forces that can be reincarnated. The Dene regard components of the landscape and natural phenomena as being sentient, challenging yet another Cartesian dualism of animate/inanimate. Smith (1998:412) calls this relationship 'bush sensibility,' noting that its primary assumption is: "that all beings, human and nonhuman, are inextricably engaged in a complex communicative interrelationship. Success in life demands actively maintaining harmony in these interrelationships especially among human beings, and among human and animal persons."

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[42] Yet, Western ontology does recognize some other-than-human-persons, for example in some religions, angels, the Devil, and other spiritual entities. For a detailed discussion of these ideas see Ingold (1994, 2000).

[43] A detailed discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this chapter but see Ingold (1994, 2006) for an extensive commentary on animals in Western worldview. Recently, philosopher Thomas I. White (2008) has examined the moral implications of Western ontology failing to recognize dolphins as persons.

Using largely narrative pieces taken from 30 years of work with a variety of northern Dene groups, the remainder of this chapter will explore these relationships by focusing on other-than-human-persons, landscape, and their relations with human-persons in the Dene worldview. At some risk of overgeneralization, I will focus on examples from the Tłı̨chǫ (Dogrib), bringing in examples from other Dene societies within the Eastern Cordilleran Athapaskan region when appropriate. Occupying what is known today as the Northwest Territories of Canada, these groups—Denesųłine (Chipewyan), Slavey, Tłı̨chǫ (Dogrib), Shúhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene), Kashogot'ine (Hare), Sahtuot'ine (Sahtu Dene), and Gwich'in (Kutchin) live in a comparatively similar environment characterized by a cold, dry continental climate with long, sharply cold winters and short, warm summers. They have subsistence practices characterized by extensive mobility focused on fish and hunting large ungulates, exhibit only minor differences in kinship organization and terminology, speak closely related Athapaskan languages, and share key mythological and cosmogonical themes and motifs. They have extensive knowledge and appreciation of each other through a long precontact practice of trade and exogamous marriage and more recent political organization to alleviate the adverse impacts brought by colonialism and a settler state.

Having worked and travelled extensively with several Dene groups for many years, I have been fortunate to have had numerous opportunities to learn from knowledgeable elders while travelling with them in the 'bush'. I have found that Dene elders are always willing to share their stories, experience, and knowledge, and through permitting me to participate in traditional activities, teach me the skills that they are so adept at. As Smith (1998:413) has observed "[s]tories are extremely important in [Dene] epistemology. For the Dene, stories are gifts, necessary for successful living (Smith 1985, 1995). All the same, they are never sufficient to this end. Once again, emphasis is laid on firsthand, experiential knowledge". This is the essence of the Dene pedagogy that I was fortunate enough to have been exposed to and, to some extent, trained in. Though I am honoured to have been given these learning opportunities, I recognize that as a non-Dene, as someone who has come to this part of the world as an adult, I can never gain a complete understanding and, therefore, regard my own level of knowing as equivalent only to that of a Dene youth, someone who has been only partially socialized and educated through the daily practice of living in the bush (cf. Guédon 1994). Consequently, this chapter must be viewed as an incomplete view

of Dene ontology, presented by an outsider who has been permitted only glimpses of a large, magnificent picture.[44]

The elders who shared the stories and experiences documented below were of a generation—the last, sadly—born and raised on the land. The move into sedentary communities occurred only in the mid-20th century, meaning that the elders I have worked with over the last 30 years spent their youth and early adult life living in the bush, moving with the cycle of seasons and resources, coming into town only occasionally to trade fine fur or meat and to replenish their supplies of tobacco, sugar, salt, tea, and other essentials. For these elders, the stories and experiences repeated here were a rich part of their understanding of the world in which they lived, a world filled with beings whose beneficence they sought to appease by following a way laid out for them by their parents and grandparents before them. Today, the stories, beliefs, rules and behaviours outlined below have little resonance with youth. Living in town, holding down fulltime jobs, it would appear that there is little in the bush life that would help a young man operate a massive rock truck at a diamond mine or assist a young Dene mother while navigating the cement canyons of a large southern city. Today, Dene youth are grappling with the change brought about through post-colonial adjustment and have little time for life on the land. Yet, for the elders, the stories, skills, and experiences they shared with me sustained them and their ancestors for generations and were regarded as critical to living safely and securely in the bush. In almost every project we worked on together, education of youth was the elders' 'prime directive' and sharing their stories and experiences with me was regarded in the same light: I was expected to write them down so that they might be available to future generations of Dene youth. Harry Simpson[45] expressed this idea to me in the early 1990s, when we were collaborating on a project to document the archaeology of an ancient canoe route (see Andrews and Zoe 1997:160):

> This trail we are travelling is the route of our ancestors that they used before contact with your people. Now we are at a crossroads where things

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[44] I acknowledge that most of my time travelling in the bush has been with Dene hunters and, therefore, my observations do not adequately reflect female bush activities or perspectives. Some women's activities, however, are discussed in chapter 6 and in Andrews and Mackenzie (1998). Like Guédon (1994:39) I also recognize the limitations of English and the written word in representing the Dene languages and their oral tradition.

[45] Harry Simpson passed away in 2007. Where I have permission to do so, I have used full names of individuals. Where I do not have explicit permission, I have used just their first name, or a pseudonym, to protect their anonymity.

> are not like the way they were in the past. If we tell young people today the history of our ancestors, it seems they don't believe us. We do not want to abandon the old ways of our ancestors. That is why we continue to work along their traditional routes. Through the oral tradition, I know of their choice fishing spots, places where they could obtain food, and their campsites. I am past the age of 60 so I remember our history. My elders used to tell me stories. I witnessed their work and now we are travelling and working along their trails. Though our young people of today do not really know the ways of our people, we want to retain our traditional ways so that whoever survives in the future will use them. So we are in effect, working to help them.

In this spirit, and in order to elicit a local way of knowing, I employ a narrative format to recount my experiences travelling with Dene elders and use them to explore how they have informed my own understanding of Dene worldview, especially with respect to other-than-human-persons, and the rules for co-habiting with them (cf. Wishart 2004:77). Through these experiences I have transformed my own worldview and the impact of this on my life and research is extensive. The next two sections follow loosely a Dene concept of time where the stories from the 'old world,' a time of chaos, precede those from the 'new world,' which replaced it. In a separate section I examine the direct implications of these stories on the daily life in the bush. The broader interpretive context for the stories is examined in the discussion. Caribou are of central importance to Dene subsistence and identity so I will focus on them in the conclusion where I will also discuss broadly how stories of the relations with other-than-human persons impact us today.

Stories from the "old world"

In July 1991, I was travelling with Harry Simpson, John B. Zoe, and Betty Anne on the first of many trips exploring the archaeology of ancient canoe trails in the Tłı̨chǫ region (Andrews and Zoe, 1997). That summer we paddled from Harry's home community of Gamètì, 300 km north along the northern portion of *ʔı̨daaàtı̨li,* or the Idaa trail, following the Camsell River to Hottah Lake. The trip was the first of a series of extended on-the-land immersion learning sessions for me. As part of my ongoing archaeological research responsibilities, I had organized the trip, arranging for canoes, gear, and food. Arriving in

Gamètì with several large canoe packs stuffed full with 8 weeks' worth of supplies, and only two canoes and four bodies to carry it all, Harry looked at the heap with great suspicion. Making me unpack everything for his inspection, he pronounced his approval or disapproval of each item before it was allowed to be repacked. Left behind on the beach were the kerosene camp stove, several canisters of fuel, every bag of freeze-dried food that I had brought, water containers, assorted extra pots and pans, and my beloved rubber boots. Harry begrudgingly agreed to keep the domed tents (in place of his customary canvas one), our modern ballistic cloth canoe packs, and the new thin inflatable camp mattresses. Later that summer he agreed that the domed tents and canoe packs were useful innovations, but not his new camp mattress, complaining that it meant only '*hodǫ̀ǫdzo, hodǫ̀ǫdzo*, [slide, slide] all night long'. To the pile we were taking with us Harry added several 2-pound pails of lard, much more tea and sugar, a large supply of cigarettes, his fish net, hunting rifle and ammunition. At 6' 3", I towered over Harry and all of the other men in Gamètì and, so, as we pulled away from shore in our more lightly loaded canoes, I wondered what the community would do with a pair of size 13 rubber boots.

Harry's fish net and rifle, along with his skill in using them, provided the bulk of our food and we all helped with butchering moose, plucking and singeing ducks, and cutting fish to make dryfish, learning these essential skills with Harry's guidance and much practice. As the trip advanced our travels adopted a comfortable rhythm: Up early, breakfast, packing of camp, loading and launching of the canoes, stopping frequently throughout the day to assess archaeological resources, shore lunches, finding time for setting a net or taking a duck, making camp, food preparation, dinner and clean-up, and a short time of reflection and relaxation before bed. Often Harry would tell stories in the late evening, something we always looked forward to.

One day Harry shot a merganser for our supper and kept the bird's head all day and later laid it carefully on a rock beside the fire. Asking him why he did so he told me it was to help illustrate the story he would tell that night. The story comes from the time before *Yamǫ̀ǫzha*, an era when stories were not anchored to place or to a chronological sequence, leading some anthropologists to refer to this story world as occurring in 'floating time'[46] (cf.

[46] Similar to Gell's (1992:149-155) A-series, in which time passes only within the context of an event, and in contrast to his B-series, where events occur relative to each other and chronological time, like books stacked in a pile.

Helm and Gillespie 1981, Andrews and Zoe 1997, Helm 2000). The story Harry told that night was from the old world. I have paraphrased it because of space limitations[47]:

> *Kwo degootso* (red-breasted merganser; *Mergus serrator*) and *Nǫ̀htà* (horned grebe; *Podiceps auritus*) were brothers and were flying home. They landed on the lake near their camp, where they changed into their human form and began to walk to their tents. When they arrived they found the camp abandoned by their family members. Only *Tatsǫ̀* (Raven) was sitting in their camp. *Tatsǫ̀* (Raven) told them that all of their family was dead, knowing full well that they weren't. *Kwo degootso* and *Nǫ̀htà* started to grieve. Crying loudly, they asked *Tatsǫ̀*, "What can we do to feel better?" *Tatsǫ̀* was the oldest of them all so everyone listened to him. "Well," he said, "if you cut your hair you'll forget the past, because it is behind you. And besides, it will make you look very distinctive and no one will forget you." Both *Kwo degootso* and *Nǫ̀htà* had beautiful, long black hair. They didn't know that *Tatsǫ̀* really wanted to cut their hair so that they wouldn't look better than him. *Nǫ̀htà* went first and *Tatsǫ̀* grabbed his hair with one hand (for he had changed into a man, too) and his *kwebeh* (or 'stone knife') with the other and, whoosh, off came *Nǫ̀htà*'s hair, cut close to the scalp. Next it was *Kwo degootso*'s turn. *Tatsǫ̀* grabbed his hair in the same fashion but, just in time, *Kwo degootso* realized it was a trick and as *Tatsǫ̀* slashed with his *kwebeh, Kwo degootso* pulled his head forward, leaving a jagged, ragged cut. Soon after their families came back from their fishing spot and *Kwo degootso* and *Nǫ̀htà* realized that *Tatsǫ̀* had only tricked them so that he would have the most beautiful hair. That is why the *Nǫ̀htà* and *Kwo degootso* look like they do today.

Like the merganser and grebe, who were brothers in both human and animal form, many stories from the old world highlight the kin relations between the various animal-human-persons—the beaver was an older brother to the muskrat, for example—though the genealogy is far too extensive to inventory here.[48]

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[47] The story is from Andrews (Fieldnotes, June 29th 1991, pp.27-8)

[48] Though see the story of the lake trout, below, for other examples.

Many of these stories revolve around the antics of the raven, noted for both his wisdom and his trickery, and often pitied for his frequent 'bad endings'. Important markers of the old world, stories of the raven are often humorous, demonstrating that despite his wisdom, his capacity for trickery almost always ends poorly for him. In all cases, however, people took pity on the raven helping him find a solution to his predicament. This story, told by Johnny Eyakfwo[49] in 1995 makes reference to a caribou fence. Though archaeological evidence shows that these large entrapment devices were used extensively in the historic period, its occurrence as a motif in this story suggests that they may be more ancient:

> Long ago the Raven built a large fence and entrapped all of the caribou. Soon the people began to starve and asked a medicine man to travel in his dream to find out what was wrong. The medicine man agreed and during his dream he saw what the Raven had done. Surrounding all of the caribou with a fence, the Raven had left only one gate where he had built a large fire to stop the caribou from escaping, and where he sat warming himself. The medicine man said he would need help in freeing the caribou. The Red Fox stepped forward saying that he would leap over the fire and jump through the gate. By running around inside the fence he would scare the caribou causing them to trample through the fire and escape. Everyone agreed that this was a good plan and the Red Fox ran to the fence. As he jumped over the fire the tip of his tail was singed—and that is why red foxes have a singed tail today—but he was successful in scaring the caribou which trampled the fire and escaped. However, the caribou also trampled the Raven killing him in the process. Only scattered feathers and bits of broken bone, here and there, were left. Despite the trouble he caused the people felt sorry for the Raven and asked the medicine man if he could bring the Raven back to life. He agreed to try and told them to pick up all the pieces they could find. He was successful but wasn't able to return the raven to his original beauty. That is why his feathers sometimes stick out yet today.[50]

The old world was a time when humans and animals could change form: For example, a human could change into its otter form to go fishing and, conversely, a mallard

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[49] Johnny Eyakfwo passed away in 1997.

[50] From Andrews (Fieldnotes, August 1995, p.37).

could land on a lake and change into its human form to walk into camp. This era of the earth's history, what some Dene refer to as the 'old world,' was a lengthy period before the rules that human-persons and other-than-human-persons live by today were agreed to. During this era, all persons had the power to transform their appearance, taking either a human or animal form. Communication was easy between people as everyone understood a single language. Powerful people could travel vast distances in their dreams. However, it was a dangerous, chaotic time as some persons, especially those that existed as giants in their primary form, made it dangerous for others to cohabit safely and peacefully. Eventually, this era came to a close when a culture-hero named *Yamǫ̀zha* rose to prominence, ridding the world of many of the most dangerous giants and monsters, negotiating understandings with many other creatures that human-persons would continue to share the world with, and setting the rules that all would live by. For elders, this was the beginning of the 'new world,' where stories are linked to places and time, what some anthropologists have called 'relative time' (Helm and Gillespie 1981).

Figure 7: Harry Simpson and Nick Black telling the story about the bones in the trout's head. (T. Andrews, 1992)

Much of the landscape takes form in the old world, too, and narratives explain how many of the regions' most prominent topographic features took shape: the mountains

created by a giant wolverine who could travel vast distances quickly by folding the earth, the Mackenzie River created by a giant ball of fat depressing the earth as it rolled toward the Arctic Ocean and that, when broken open, released untold numbers of mosquitoes, or the barrenlands devoid of trees because an angry medicine man, bent on revenge, started a fire that burned them off (Helm and Thomas, 1966:18; Helm, 1994:144-5). Stories from the old world also help to explain why some animals look or act the way they do today. In one example, the hare and moose fought when they were in human form, with the hare throwing the moose into the fire. That is why the moose has a lighter colouration on its back and why hare's front paws appear to be singed. Intended to amaze and entertain, the stories establish an ancient connection between all organisms, one that is often expressed in kin terms.

In this way, they also create links between humans and animals that take on a corporeal reality. This relationship is particularly clear in another story from the old world, the story of how the lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) saved his human tools. This paraphrased version was told by elders Nick Black and Harry Simpson in 1992[51] (see Figure 7):

> A long time ago all the animals were once people. All the ones who live on the land and on water, like ducks, for example; all the animals were people. Many of them were related. The swan and the teal were brothers. The wolverine and the marten were brothers-in-law. The wolf and the raven were brothers-in-law. But the Lake Trout was a person too. He would change into his fish form when he needed to catch fish for the people. When the world changed and the animals changed to the way they are today some of them kept their human tools. The Lake Trout was one of these. All the bones in his head are his tools, or his food, from when he was human. Among the tools are his bone knife, a stone scraper, a hide flesher, and a wooden spear for spearing caribou in the water. Some of the bones are his food. He has a moose leg bone for marrow, a moose head, and a moose nose which is very good. He even has tools to go with his food! There is a wooden plate and a cup. All these are in the Lake Trout head. Next time you eat a trout head ask an elder to tell you the story.

[51] From Andrews (Fieldnotes, June 28, 1992, pp. 8-12). Nick Black passed away in 2000.

Some narratives from the old world teach that humans and animals are genetically related in that some creation stories tell of the mating of human-persons with animal-persons. For example, the Tłįchǫ creation myth recounts the story of a woman who is tricked into mating with a dog, who appeared to her in his human form. This version from the website of the Tłįchǫ Government (2011) is an abridged form:

> A young woman who did not have a husband, lived with her two brothers. One day a handsome stranger came to their house. The brothers said to the sister, "This handsome man has come for you so you must marry him." So the couple was wed.
>
> On their wedding night the young woman awoke to the sound of a dog gnawing on a bone. The woman's husband was also no longer at her side. She jumped up, lit the fire, and searched the tent but there was no dog in the tent. The woman went back to bed and fell asleep. Once again she was awakened by the sound of a dog gnawing on a bone. The woman called out to one of her brothers who threw a hatchet in the direction of the noise. There was a loud cry and then silence. The woman and her brothers quickly lit the fire and found a large black dog lying dead. The woman's husband did not return.
>
> Eventually the woman gave birth to six puppies. The woman loved these puppies but she was also ashamed of them and concealed them in a sack. One day upon returning to the camp, the woman noticed the footprints of children around the camp. The next day instead of checking her snares as she usually did, she hid behind a bush close to the tent. After she had left, the six puppies crawled out of the sack and turned into three girls and three boys. The woman ran towards them but before she could reach them, two of the girls and one of the boys jumped back into the sack. The remaining three children grew up strong and healthy and produced many children. We are descended from them and that is why we call ourselves the Tłįchǫ or Dogrib people.

The relationship between human-persons and dog-persons is a complex one. Dogs are widely regarded throughout the Dene realm as having an affinity with humans, willing to work for them with a special capacity to understand their needs. Many Dene societies impose other rules with respect to dogs. For example, because dogs are seen as scavengers and will eat foods that humans never would, they are regarded as being unclean and are therefore rarely allowed to share habitation space with humans, be present when humans eat, or be fed fresh caribou meat, as this might show disrespect for the caribou and threaten a hunter's future success (Hearne 1911:307). A Denesułine man whose wife is pregnant may not shoot a dog as it may result in the baby being born deformed (Sharp, 1976) and similar practices are observed by other Dene groups.[52] These practices acknowledge the special authority that dogs have because of their close relationship with humans while helping to manage the power that dogs have because of the same relationship.[53]

Generally, these narratives demonstrate that human-persons are directly related to animal-persons, sometimes through descent, creating a lasting familial relationship that continues to govern human-animal interactions. The stories from the old world teach that animals are kin and must be regarded as one would regard members of one's own family.

Yamǫǫ̀zha brings Order to the World

While the stories of the old world tell of a time of chaos, filled with giants, dangerous monsters, and transforming animal-human-persons, the narratives of *Yamǫǫ̀zha* tell of a time of increasing stability, one where human-persons and animal-persons take their final form, where giant creatures leave of their own accord, are killed, or forced to reside elsewhere, and where some components of the landscape gain power and form. This is the 'new world,' a period where stories are told relative to place and time.[54] *Yamǫǫ̀zha*, a human-person, plays a central role in bringing stability and setting the rules that all entities are to live by. The narratives of *Yamǫǫ̀zha* are part of a body of narratives sometimes referred as the stories of the Two Brothers. Importantly, most Dene groups in the Mackenzie Valley share stories of the Two Brothers they know the protagonists by different names (see Table 4). Most Dene groups have narratives that tell of the culture-hero being born in their area and numerous others where he undertakes deeds that begin to bring

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[52] Wishart (2004: 91 footnote) notes that for the Gwich'in, "children's table scraps are never given to dogs with the belief that the children will become sick and never develop properly."

[53] See Sharp (1976) for a detailed discussion.

[54] As in Gell's (1992:149-155) B-series; See footnote 5.

stability to a chaotic world. *Yamǫǫ̀zha*, which loosely translates as 'the traveler,' had a younger brother, known by the Tłı̨chǫ as *Gahmǫǫ̀zha*, who also travels, but in ways and directions opposite of his brother, bringing trouble and chaos, sometimes trying to undo his older brothers good deeds. Most Dene stories tell of *Yamǫǫ̀zha* travelling toward the rising sun and therefore always in light. However, his brother travels west, towards the setting sun and is almost always in darkness and with this example of literary pathetic fallacy, the play of

Group or Community	***Older brother***	***Younger***	***Source***
Denesułı̨ne	Yabatheya	?	GNWT 1993
Tłı̨chǫ	Yamǫǫ̀zha	Gahmǫǫ̀zha, sometimes Ts'idzǫ	Fieldnotes
Shúhtagot'ine	Yamǫzhah	Bechèle	Fieldnotes
Dene Tha	Yamǫhdeyi	?	Moore and Wheelock, 1990
Fort Simpson Slavey	Zhambadèzha	Dzet'ı̨	Fieldnotes
Nahanni Butte Slavey	Yampadeja	?	Williamson 1955, 1956
Sahtuot'ine	Yamǫria	Yamogii	Fieldnotes
Kashogot'ine	Yamǫria	Yamǫgah	Fieldnotes
Gwich'in	Atachuukąı̨ı̨	?	Heine et al, 1994

Table 4: Synonymy of the Two Brothers. Further research is required to complete and confirm entries in the table.

light and dark set the tone for the brothers' deeds and actions in the various narratives associated with them.

All Mackenzie Dene share the stories of the giant beavers, where *Yamǫǫ̀zha* chases these dangerous animals from the landscape. In the localized versions, the giant beavers build huge dams that divert water courses and block travel, swamp canoes with the splash of their giant tails, and build massive lodges, many of which, according to local tradition, have are represented today as prominent bedrock hills. Although these stories start in different regions, like a complex dendritic drainage where multiple tributaries rise in different origins, the regional stories of the Two Brothers soon flow together to take up one course and follow *Yamǫǫ̀zha* chasing the beavers down the Mackenzie River to Bear Rock, near Tulita. Here,

Yamoria (as it is more appropriate to refer to him by his local name) shoots two arrows at the beavers swimming in the mouth of the Bear River and misses and, today, a powerful eddy at this location often traps large waterlogged logs. Anyone lucky enough to see these deadhead logs—*Yamoria*'s arrows—are expected to have good luck for a time. Eventually, *Yamoria* kills three beavers and stretches their hides on Bear Rock, an event visible today marked by the growth of trees.

However, here too, regional variations of the story become apparent. For example, the Shúhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene) narrative tells of a giant named *Bets'erihdele*, who kills the three beavers and stretches their hides on Bear Rock. Realizing that the giant is also a threat to his people's well-being, *Yamǫzháh* (his Shúhtagot'ine name) tricks the giant into thinking he is a giant beaver. The giant shoots two arrows at *Yamǫzháh* while he swims at the mouth of the river, missing him of course, and it is these that augur a good fortune for anyone lucky enough to see them today. Eventually, the giant chases *Yamǫzháh* down the river and out of the region for good. Similarly, the Kashogot'ine of Fort Good Hope attribute the killing of the beavers to *Bets'erihdele*, who is eventually killed by another giant named *Agadekǫ* and *Yamoria* plays a minor role in the beaver story (Bella T'Seleie, pers. comm. 2000). Narratives involving the Gwich'in culture-hero, *Atachuukąjj*, take place far to the north of this place and though he too chases giant beavers, the stories of Bear Rock are not encountered at all (Heine et al, 2001). Despite these regional differences, Bear Rock and the stories of the giant beavers acts as a kind of narrative anchor that the Dene Nation—the polity created by the Denesułǫne, Slavey, Tłǫchǫ, Shúhtagot'ine, Kashogot'ine, Sahtuot'ine, and Gwich'in to lead their land claim negotiations with Canadian government in the 1970s—uses as the basis of its corporate logo.

The stories of *Yamǫǫ̀zha* provide further help in understanding the relationship between human and other-than-human-persons. They also help explain how landscape is empowered and becomes an agent in Dene worldview. The two stories below present an example of each.

Hodǫ̀ǫ̀dzoo: The Slide

In 1992, while preparing to leave for a trip down the Camsell River, the northern part of the *ʔı̨dàatı̨̀li,*[55] we spent a few days preparing in Harry's home community of Gamètì. That year, two young men—Francis from Gamètì and Tony from Behchokǫ̀—would be joining us. Tony, like me, had grown up in a large community and had not lived in the bush from birth. Francis, on the other hand, had spent much of his young life pursuing a bush life. Yet, reflecting more of a global teenage culture than a Tłı̨chǫ one, Francis showed up to a meeting with us to discuss the nature of our canoe survey wearing torn blue jeans, a studded black jean jacket, and a weight lifting belt with a machete-sized "Rambo" survival-style knife strapped to it. Needless to say, Francis underwent the same careful equipment scrutiny from Harry that I had the previous summer.

That summer we visited a number of very interesting and special places, one of which was called *Hodǫ̀ǫ̀dzoo*, or 'the slide'. Paddling along the shore of *Semı̨̀tì* ('my net lake') we turned into a long, narrow bay. Pulling our canoes to shore and securing them carefully, we started our walk through thick Boreal forest though, soon, the topography opened up and the exposed bedrock of the Canadian Shield so prevalent in the Tłı̨chǫ region began to dominate. Eventually we reached a long bedrock ridge, polished smooth but covered in generations of lichen growth. Walking along the ridge we came to a location where the lichens had been rubbed away leaving a mostly straight 'path' running down the abrupt face of the bedrock ridge. This was *Hodǫ̀ǫ̀dzoo* and explaining that this was the place where people would slide for 'good luck', Harry told us the story (paraphrased):

> Long ago a giant wolverine, *Nǫ̀gha*, lived in this area. People would come to this place to slide to tell their luck. However, knowing this, *Nǫ̀gha* would try to trap them by putting pointed stakes at the bottom of the hill. The people would slide and become impaled on the stakes and *Nǫ̀gha* would take them back to his house and eat them. So the people appealed to *Yamǫǫ̀zha* to find a way to make *Hodǫ̀ǫ̀dzoo* safe again. Quietly, *Yamǫǫ̀zha* went to the bottom of the hill and slid his caribou skin shirt over one of the stakes letting it protrude from the neck hole. Twisting his nose until it bled, he let his blood cover the end of the stake to make it appear as though he had been

[55] Translates loosely as "the trail ahead" and is the central route or 'main road' providing access to hundreds of other trails and a Tłı̨chǫ land use area exceeding 150,000 square kilometers

> impaled and then pretended to be dead. When *Nǫ̀gha* came along and saw that he had caught another human he was happy and took *Yamǫǫ̀zha*, tied him up and put him in his birchbark packsack to carry home. Along the way, *Yamǫǫ̀zha* kept careful watch and now and then would try to confound *Nǫ̀gha* by quietly snagging a passing branch to make the wolverine trip. When he got home, *Nǫ̀gha* placed *Yamǫǫ̀zha* by the fire and asked his wife to get his knife for he had a little moose to butcher. The wolverine's children were watching *Yamǫǫ̀zha* near the fire. *Yamǫǫ̀zha* opened one of his eyes and the children noticed. 'Father, your little moose is still alive,' they said. At this, *Yamǫǫ̀zha* willed one of the burning logs to roll out of the fire and burn his bindings setting himself free. Soon he had killed the two adult wolverines and the young ones ran outside and up a tree to escape. Standing at the base of the tree *Yamǫǫ̀zha* looked up at them to see that they were crying profusely—so much that the mucous from their nose was running down the tree in copious amounts—begging him not to kill them. "What will you do for me not to kill you," *Yamǫǫ̀zha* asked them. "We will promise not to kill humans ever again and we will gift our mucous to you so that you can use it as medicine and as gum to caulk your birchbark containers and canoes to make them watertight," they wailed. *Yamǫǫ̀zha* agreed but before he let them go he used his *ʔíkǫǫ* (medicine power) to make them small like modern wolverines.[56]

In this way, *Yamǫǫ̀zha* had made the slide safe for humans to use and once Harry had finished telling the story he showed us how to test our luck at *Hodǫǫ̀dzoo*. Breaking the top off a nearby spruce tree to use as a sled, Harry placed it at the top of the slide and sat on it with his legs stretched out before him (see Figure 8). Explaining that you must not steer with your hands or feet, he pushed off and slid rapidly down the abrupt face of *Hodǫǫ̀dzoo*. Reaching the bottom he indicated that it was our turn and each of us followed his example. When we were at the bottom, Harry explained that as we had slid straight without twisting or tumbling, we would live a long life or, in his words, 'would see our grey hairs'. The grey hairs that I am sprouting today are testament to a successful slide down *Hodǫǫ̀dzoo.*

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[56] Other Dene groups have a version of this story and a Slavey version was recorded by Frank Russell in the late 1890s (Russell 1900). The story is from Andrews (Fieldnotes, 30 June 1992, pp. 29-31).

Figure 8: Harry Simpson preparing to slide at *Hodǫ̀òdzoo*

Harry told us that in the old days there used to be two slides at this location. Though overgrown now, the other slide was used to assess the future ability of dog teams and young pups were sent down the second slide to see if they slid straight.

Ts'okwe and Yamǫǫ̀zha's dreaming

The same summer—1992—that I worked with Nick Black and Harry Simpson, we had a chance to visit another powerful location, *Ts'okwe*. Over the years, occasionally my experiences were so moving and personal that I have been reluctant, or unable, to write about them. My engagement with the dreaming place of *Ts'okwe* is one of them.[57] In early July we had been working our way by canoe around the shoreline of *Semı̨tì* stopping frequently to explore archaeological sites when it came time to finally visit the sacred site known as *Ts'okwe*. We decided to take a break before climbing the hill to rest and prepare so we camped on a small island near the base of the hill for two days. The prominent landmark, rising some 200 metres above the lake level, had been visible for several days and, aware of its significance, it seemed to loom over us: Each day as we worked closer to it

[57] The Tłı̨chǫ helped to publish a children's book telling the story of *Ts'okwe* (Zoe, Zoe and Willett, 2009) and, as a result, I am comfortable now with revealing the story of my own experience at *Ts'okwe*.

the anticipation of our visit grew. *Ts'okwe* is a dreaming place—*nàte k'è*—where young men would be sent alone or in groups for several days, deprived of food and water, in the hope that they would acquire *ʔɻk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* for hunting through their dreams. *Ts'okwe* is made especially powerful for dreaming through an interaction with *Yamǫǫ̀zha*. Though people of either gender can dream, and dreams can occur anywhere, because of its association with *ʔɻk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* for hunting only males are permitted to sleep here.

The summer was growing very warm and the days we spent on the island were the hottest we had so far experienced on the trip. The heat helped intensify the tension we were all feeling about our forthcoming night on *Ts'okwe* and Nick and Harry helped increase the tension by repeatedly telling us two stories: Indeed, my fieldnotes indicate that Nick told one of the stories seven times. The first story tells of how *Ts'okwe* gained its power and authority and recounts events that occurred in a single day in *Yamǫǫ̀zha*'s life. In the story, which takes place on *ʔɻdaàtɻ̀li,* or the Idaa trail, the trail we were travelling on, *Yamǫǫ̀zha* starts his day at *Ɉhtɻ̀k'ika* ("bow birch there") where he cuts a birch tree and begins to make a bow.[58] After working on the bow for a period of time, *Yamǫǫ̀zha* continues south to *Hodǫ̀ǫ̀dzoo* where he spends much of the day dealing with the giant wolverine, the details of which have been explained above. Tired, he continued south on the trail till he reached *Ts'okwe* where he finished making his bow. Soon *Yamǫǫ̀zha* fell asleep and had a dream. The story is interesting because it reveals both *Yamǫǫ̀zha's* human and supernatural qualities—like other humans he must walk and make his own bow, but unlike most humans he has the power to defeat a giant wolverine—but it also explains how *Ts'okwe* acquired its power to aid young hunters in their dreams. For us, the story affirmed the significance of the place, but it was the other story—the one that Nick told seven times—that caused much reflection among those of us who had never before visited *Ts'okwe.* I have paraphrased the story from the translation I recorded[59] because of space:

> A young man was a poor provider for his large family. His wife begged her father-in-law to help his son become a better hunter so the young man's father, a powerful medicine man, took him to *Ts'okwe* so that he might

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[58] When telling this part of the story, elders make the motion of drawing a crooked knife toward them, mimicking the gesture that *Yamǫǫ̀zha* would have used. See Andrews, Zoe, and Herter (1998) for details of this story and its relation to travelling on the Idaa Trail.

[59] From Andrews, Fieldnotes, June 30 – July 3, 1992, pp. 16-24 and Tape Transcripts CR.91.T01 and M.92.T02.

> dream and hopefully obtain some *ɔjk'ǫǫ̀* for hunting. His father, who would sleep beside him, had the ability to see into other people's dreams and told his son that during his dream some people would give him a cup full of knowledge that his people had acquired through hard experience over many generations: he was told that the cup contained the 'tears of your people'. If he was fortunate enough to be presented with the cup, he warned his son to drink only a little. He was also warned that an animal-helper would reveal itself to him. The animal would help him throughout his life and as a result he was not permitted to kill or eat this animal. He was also told that he would be given a medicine song that, like the dream, he was not permitted to reveal until given a sign. Finally, his father warned him not to tell of his dream experience until the proper time. There would be a sign when the time was appropriate. During the young man's dream the cup was offered as foretold and contrary to his father's warnings the young man drank the entire contents, throwing the cup to the ground when he was done. In the morning he began to tell of his dream but his father stopped him. When he got home he thought he had strong medicine so he began to work it—chanting, drumming, and singing. The next morning his wife found him dead.

Whenever Nick told the story both he and Harry would laugh at the foolish behavior and inappropriate actions of the young man, underscoring the importance of respecting the power of *ɔjk'ǫǫ̀*. Later, Harry provided more context on the role that dreaming plays in a hunter's life and what they used to do when they spent the night. He told us that young men would sleep there in spring, lying on a bed of spruce boughs while they slept. However, the pungent fragrance of freshly cut spruce boughs often interfered with their dreams so they built a stage on which to sleep, which raised them from the ground.

The next morning we arose to a cloudless sky and the lake like a mirror. The heat drove everyone out of their tents early and conversation soon centered on what gear we would need to bring to the top. John and I decided to share a small backpack tent: He would carry the tent body and I the poles. Tony and Francis were taking just their sleeping bags and

head nets and sleeping 'outside.' Nick and Harry brought mosquito bars[60] and would use these. I wished I had one as well as they are light, easy to set, and perfect for this situation. We each would carry a little food and some water. We decided to wait until 6:00 pm, before climbing the hill, an attempt to avoid the hottest part of the day.

The climb took just over 4 hours and I admired both Nick, who at 74, and Harry, in his late 60s, climbed as strongly as the rest of us much younger men. About halfway, John took Nick's pack to make his load lighter and once we had reached the top Nick said "This is what it must be like getting into Heaven, having to carry all your sins with you". At the top we made a fire (see Figure 9) but soon we were searching out a place to sleep and passed a relatively comfortable night. The climb down the next day took only 2 hours.

Figure 9: The view from the top of *Ts'okwe*.

A sacred site of tremendous significance I remain deeply honoured to have been invited to sleep on top of *Ts'okwe*. When we visited Gamètì following that summer everyone was aware that we had spent a night sleeping on *Ts'okwe* and a few people teased me,

[60] An insect net, hung from trees or poles, and draped over a sleeping bag to keep the occupant free from mosquitoes and blackflies.

wondering if I now had powerful medicine. A few elder men admitted that they had been taken to *Ts'okwe* in their youth but they never mentioned what happened while they were there. One elder told me that he had been taken there with a group of young men, an experience similar to our own. This elder (and one other) also remarked that 'nothing happened' referring to the fact that he did not receive 'power' in his dream. In keeping with

Figure 10: John B. Zoe, Betty Anne Betsidea, and Harry Simpson sitting beside the old man's bald spot at *Kwedoo* (T.Andrews, 1991).

the rules revealed in the story of the foolish young man, I have never revealed the nature of my dreams while at Ts'okwe and when asked I take my lead from Gamètì elders and reply that 'nothing happened'.[61]

Sentient Places

These stories help explain how a geographic location might gain authority and hold agentic capacity over Tłı̨chǫ life. In many cases where this is the case, the location gains it authority—though not exclusively—through some connection to an action undertaken by *Yamǫǫ̀zha*, as in the examples above. At most of these places, the Tłı̨chǫ perform a ritual, often a geomantic one, in order to ascertain some sense of their future.[62] An ideal example

[61] Recognizing, at least for me, that this also reflects the truth.

[62] See Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998 for a fuller discussion of ritual, particularly geomantic ritual in the context of Tłı̨chǫ sacred sites.

of this is *Kwedoò* ('blood rock'), where *Yamǫǫ̀zha* first came to the Tłı̨chǫ. *Yamǫǫ̀zha* and his brother, *Gahmǫǫ̀zha* are believed to have been born in a caribou's hoof but were found as tiny boys—the size of spiders—under a log at *Kwedoò*. According to the late Jean Wetrade of Gamètì, who told us this story in 1992,[63] the boys were cold and hungry and their tiny voices, sounding like squeaks to the old man's ears, attracted him to overturn the log they were sheltering under. He adopted them and raised them as his sons and they were trained in the lifeways of the Tłı̨chǫ, as all youth are. However, as teenagers *Gahmǫǫ̀zha* convinced *Yamǫǫ̀zha* to play a trick on the old man and, when he was sleeping, they cut open the top of his head and threw heated rocks into his brain cavity. The old man turned to stone and today his skull is visible as a large hill rising some 100 metres from the surrounding landscape. Tłı̨chǫ visitors to the place climb the glacially rounded bedrock hill—the dome of the old man's skull—to find the top covered with a thick growth of lichens with the rocks broken and split, testament to the violent episode in the story. At one place, a patch of the bedrock is rubbed free of lichens sits before a large, deep crack that is filled with water. When we first visited, Harry sat beside and patted it lovingly, noting he was "rubbing the old man's bald spot" (see Figure 10). Here, visitors kneel (see Figure 11), and after saying a prayer to honour the old man, drop a small pebble into the crack to listen for it falling down into the old man's water-filled skull: The sound of the stone falling augurs a good fortune for those fortunate enough to hear it.[64] Other places require similar geomantic ritual, where the immediate environmental effect is interpreted to augur one's future. Travellers were required to visit these places during the appropriate season and to do otherwise risked disrespecting them. By trying their 'luck' at each place, visitors succumbed to the authority of the place in assessing their past behaviour. What Ingold (2000:75) has called the 'underside of trust,' those people that had acted disrespectfully in some way might receive a bad sign foretelling of illness or even death, creating anxiety and requiring the participant to correct the behaviour before visiting the place when the seasonal round brought them back again. Similar to the observations that Basso (1984, 1988, 1996a) has made for the Cibecue Apache, for the Tłı̨chǫ, sentient places have agentic effect on human behaviour.

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[63] Paraphrased from project tape transcript RL.92.T6, February 28, 1992 and Andrews (Fieldnotes, July 20, 1991, pp. 73-4).

[64] The day that we visited the site, we discovered a stone tool quarry about halfway up the hill leading us to another discovery: How place names can encode the location of lithic quarries, preserving knowledge that can be thousands of years old. See Andrews and Zoe, 1997 for a discussion.

Place can also be made sentient by another category of other-than-human-persons, beings the Tłı̨chǫ call *weyèedii*, or spirit-animals.[65] They are usually giant creatures and can

Figure 11: John B. Zoe dropping a stone into the crack at *Kwedoo* (T.Andrews, 1994).

[65] *Nàghą*, or 'bushman' is another category of malevolent beings. *Nàghą* are usually male, not properly socialized as humans are, frequently half-starving, and live secretively in the bush outside of human settlements, sometimes raiding for food at night. They are dangerous and are a threat to individuals, especially women or children and sometimes mothers will tell stories of *nàghą* as a way of ensuring children stay close to camp. A proper treatment of this topic is beyond the scope of this chapter but see Basso 1978 for an extensive discussion.

take many forms—fish, insects, mammals, birds, wind, whirlpool—and all Dene groups have numerous examples. Most often, they are malevolent but most will remain quiet, asleep, as long as human-persons avoid direct encounters with them, while others are in a state of constant rage—sometimes embodied in features such as violent rapids or waterfalls—that must be avoided entirely. We travelled near one place like this, where a giant musk-ox, enraged because human-persons disrespected her calf by trapping it with a fence and holding it there until it starved to death, is embodied in a violent set of rapids. Paddling near this locality in 1994, we could hear the angry roar of rapids some distance away and to avoid this dangerous place we portaged to a lower stretch of the river. The elders refused to permit us even to walk to the rapids to see them. At another place—called *Ts'ihdìiwhaljjdeh*—a giant ant is said to have power to draw things towards itself, which it used to divert a river. The river drops over a cliff and into the ant's mouth, marked by two pincer-like rock pinnacles on either side of the fall. A tragic plane crash not far from this location in 1972 was said to have been caused by the ant using its power to pull the plane from the air. Some of these *weyèedii* have abandoned their customary places leaving them free from danger. For example, on the Ingraham Trail, outside of Yellowknife, road construction is said to have frightened a *weyèedii* from leaving a place called *Wodzekwe*.

Following the rules set down by *Yamǫǫ̀zha*

Many other things—the four winds, rainbows, the northern lights, the stars and other celestial objects, trees, islands, some rocks, fire—also are regarded as sentient and they must be respected too. Travellers try to appease this vast body of immanent, mostly unseen, onlookers by leaving simple votive offerings regularly during their journey.[66] In summer, this often means offering a garland of branches or a few leaves as a gift to each new water body encountered en route (cf. Sharp 2001: 57). When camped near a lake for a period of time, the Shúhtagot'ine will sometimes push the stem of a large willow branch into the soft sand where the water of the lake meets the shore. On the small branches they tie colourful wool or silk embroidery threads and a single hair from every person in the camp. This acts as both an offering and a kind of decoy: Should malevolent spiritual entities try to enter camp they will be attracted instead to the branch and avoid human encounters. In winter, offerings are made more frequently to fire.

[66] Often referred to as 'paying the land' or 'paying the water'.

These rules and practices—said to have been established by *Yamǫǫ̀zha*—are based on mutual respect, where it is most important in the rules that govern hunting and relations with animal-persons. The rules also guide daily activities and lead to respectful practices incorporated into almost all mundane tasks. In the next section I will review how these rules intersect with daily life.

The Loons' Flight

On a warm summer evening in July, we stopped work for the day and had drawn our three canoes up at a rocky campsite on *Kwets'ahtì* [67] ('rocks around it lake'), located on the Marion River about halfway between Great Slave and Great Bear lakes. I was travelling with a group of Tłı̨chǫ men from Gamètì and Behchokǫ̀—two elders, Harry Simpson and Nick Black, and three young men, John, Tony, and Francis. Setting up camp always followed a precise and prescribed order: remove the gear from the boat, secure the canoes, gather firewood and make a fire, fill the tea pot with fresh water and set it to boil on the fire, cut long spruce poles to set up the antenna for the Spilsbury SBX-11 portable single side-band high frequency radio—known everywhere in the north simply as the 'bush radio'—to get it operating quickly in order to listen to the chatter of people in bush camps across the north, set up our tents, pluck, gut, and singe the ducks killed a few hours earlier and cook a communal meal of duck soup. The only time this pattern changed was when it was raining, when setting up the tents received a higher priority, or when we were transporting fresh meat, which required construction of a drying rack while the tea pot was placed on the fire. Of course, the culinary details changed in response to Harry and Nick's hunting or fishing success as we travelled.

After supper had been eaten and cleaned up, we sat around the fire drinking tea and listening to Harry and Nick tell stories. My nascent facility with Tłı̨chǫ allowed me to grasp only the basic outline of what was being said, so John always kindly and carefully translated for me. Though well into the evening, being at a latitude of 64 degrees north meant that the sun was still high in the sky and would remain so for most of the night allowing us a clear view of our setting: Our campsite was in a low rolling landscape, on the shore of a clear, blue water lake on a broad exposure of glacially smoothed rock so prevalent in the region dominated by the Canadian Shield, lightly sheltered by a surrounding fringe of stunted white and black spruce, paper birch, and aspen. Human voices at low volume, with the distant

[67] See Andrews and Zoe 1997 for details about the trail project.

calls and chatter of birds, insects, the crackle of the fire, and the rush of water where it exited the lake not too far away, formed our quiet soundscape, making for a peaceful, relaxing evening.

In the midst of this relative peace, two Common loons (*Gavia immer*) flew towards our camp just a few metres above the trees. As they passed overhead, they stopped flapping their wings, gliding, and holding them in a low, open V-shape while craning their necks to gaze at us watching them, close enough that we could hear the gliding 'whoosh' of their bodies as they passed through the air overhead. At once, both Nick and Harry, jumped to their feet startling us all—the loons included—while clapping their hands and exclaiming 'massìcho' ('thank you very much') over and over. We were told that the loons had just communicated with us, telling us that we would see moose tomorrow. Having subsisted on a steady diet of fish and ducks for several days, the prospect of fresh meat was welcome. Nick and Harry explained that though humans and loons no longer had the power of communication through speech (except in dreams), loons could show us signs and thereby convey important messages. By holding their wings steady in a low, open V-shape they were showing us the sign of moose horns and telling us that they were near. Sure enough, early the next day we saw three moose not long after departing from our camp.

Hunters pay careful attention to the world around them, using all of their senses to do so, as signs of potential hunting opportunity can come from a variety of different sources. For example, in an account given by Smith (1998: 418) Denesułine hunters camped for several days waiting for caribou "when they simultaneously stood, threw the remaining tea in their cups into the fire, and began making preparations for hunting". Smith notes that though no caribou were visible he and the hunters noted "a faint but unmistakable whiff of the odour of caribou wafting on the breeze". The behavior of birds is always carefully attended to as loons, ravens and other species are considered helpful, sometimes guiding hunters to prey. This careful practice of being alert to the environment through the faculty of all senses while attending to the rules of respecting other-than-human-persons is a critical component of what Smith (1998) calls 'bush sensibility' and Goulet (1998) an 'experiential approach to knowledge'. As with the loons who told of nearby moose, they only did so because they recognized that we had been careful to respect those around us.

The Moose's Ears

During the summer, with migratory caribou kilometers away to the north, moose (*Alces alces*) are much sought-after prey (see Figure 12). That summer, the one that Nick

Figure 12: Harry Simpson and a young bull moose. (T. Andrews, 1992)

Figure 13: Nick Black taking the flesh off of a moose hide. (T. Andrews, 1992).

Black also travelled with us, Harry shot two moose, providing us with a significant amount of fresh meat, but also necessitating many chores to ensure that the hides and surplus meat made it home to be distributed in the community (see Figure 13). A moose is a significant gift providing many tens of kilos of fresh meat, a hide prized for its thickness and durability for manufacture of clothing, footwear, and strong braided rope, bones to provide marrow, bone grease and raw material for some tools, antler for tools, energizing blood for soup, various organs providing rich sources of minerals and other nutrients, intestinal and back fat critical for a northern meat-focused diet, and an abundance of strong sinew, removed from the thoracolumbar fascia of the animal's back, for sewing and for making strong cord. Moose may be killed by only certain techniques and while shooting them with rifle or arrow, snaring them, or stabbing them with a spear (cf. Sharp 2001: 69) are acceptable, hitting them over the head is not and is considered disrespectful.[68] When a moose is killed, a hunter takes special precaution to ensure that the gift is respected requiring a series of small practices or rites to honour the moose.

Following a strict pattern for efficiently butchering the animal, doing so quietly and quickly without celebration, the hunter incorporates small rites into this process (cf. Goulet, 1998:63). For example, when removing the heart the hunter carefully slices open both main chambers to allow the blood to drain helping to ensure this important food item won't spoil. However, in doing so he must be careful not to cut the tendons inside the chamber that connect the sides for to do so would risk insulting the moose and bring poor luck for the hunter. Blood draining from the butcher site is also respected and hunters are careful not to get it on their clothing or to walk through it, marking their moose-hide footwear. Once, while helping to butcher a moose on the shore of a lake, I asked a young woman to pass me a file so that I could sharpen my knife, not realizing the difficult position I had put her in with my request. Rather than picking up the file located at her feet and simply leaning over to hand it to me, she walked away from the butchering location into the thick, bug-filled bush behind us, coming out on the shoreline well behind me, all necessary because of my insensitivity to her need not to step over the moose's blood trail. Though beyond the scope of this chapter, women's power, embodied through menses, can endanger (Ryan 1995)

[68] This proscription holds for almost all animals though does not apply to fish.

men's ability to hunt, and hence the need for the young woman to take the difficult route she did.[69] An experienced hunter would have not burdened her with the request.

Figure 14: A moose skull properly disposed of. (T. Andrews, 1992)

Once the meat and other parts are brought back to camp other rites and observances are necessary. Meat should be carefully dried and stored, ensuring that dogs do not disturb the supply. Bones to be disposed must be piled neatly outside of busy areas and large terrestrial animals can never be disposed of in the campfire. This may appear contradictory to findings from numerous subarctic archaeological deposits where small fragments of smashed and calcined bone, presumably from terrestrial animals, is frequently found in hearth deposits. Harry Simpson, explained to me once that the practice of making

[69] See Guédon (1994:41-3) for similar example of an ethnographer's process of learning and see Goulet (1998: 95-7) for a Dene Tha account of the 'power of menstrual blood'. See Helm (1994:95) for another Tłįchǫ example.

'bone grease,' where the bones are smashed into small fragments and boiled to render their tallow or 'grease' is not seen as being disrespectful to the animal, and this transformation permits the waste bone fragments to be disposed of in the hearth. Bones from animals taken from the water, for example, large fish, beavers, and ducks, must be returned to the water.

After one of Harry's successful hunts, Nick told us that we had not properly respected the moose. When the next moose was killed he instructed us to cut its ears off and leave them hanging in a nearby tree, telling us that with this the moose would not hear the approaching hunter the next time it was stalked. We were also told that when leaving a skull at the kill site—as it is considered a prime food resource it is often returned to camp to be roasted or boiled—it was to be elevated from the ground by a few feet with the nose pointing toward the rising sun (see Figure 14). In other Dene groups, it was common to tie skulls in the trees to keep them off the ground and away from disturbance.

The instructions we received with respect to proper handling of moose skulls contain two implicit understandings: that the moose's life-force will be reincarnated and that by removing the ears, the hunters will receive an opportunistic advantage the next time they hunt. In a similar fashion, being careful not to sever the connecting tendons in the moose's heart when butchering it, will ensure the moose will have a strong heart when it is reincarnated. Reincarnation, a belief widely held throughout the Dene realm (e.g. Goulet 1998; Sharp 2001; Slobodin 1970, 1994), applies to all persons, though is rarely spoken of today among the Tłı̨chǫ. Cutting the moose's ears off, combined with dreaming, *ɔ̨ı̨kǫǫ̨*, and 'bush sensibility' (Smith 1998), give the hunter an opportunistic advantage while also serving to balance the complexities of the give and take of reciprocity (Anderson 2000: 127; Nadasdy 2007).

The Wind Charmer

In 1994, after several years of travelling canoe trails we recognized that the experience of travel was missing from the pedagogy of the modern bricks-and-mortar school and that it needed to be brought into the classroom. That summer, John B. Zoe and I asked Father Jean Pochat-Cotilloux and Jim Martin, then CEO of the Tłı̨chǫ Board of Education, to join us. The result of this collaboration was a new program called "Trails of Our Ancestors" (DDBE 1996) that began the following year. Using 22 foot Kevlar canoes, crews of six—a mix of elders and youth—traced the numerous canoe trails in the region, where youth were

exposed to their culture and history through learning place names, associated stories and bush skills (Zoe 2007). With Harry and John leading the way each summer thereafter, the students were also trained to have a special respect for archaeological resources and the first summer the group made an important discovery: A half-century old wind charmer. More importantly, this artefact came with a complete biography since Harry was present when it had been originally used. Carefully collecting the wind charmer, John and Harry brought it to the museum in Yellowknife where I recorded the following story:

Figure 15: Wind charmer found in 1995 (T. Andrews).

The *dèchɻgètlǫ*, or wind charmer, (see Figure 15) had been made and used by Pierre Mantla and Joseph Euski (Huskey) in the early spring of either 1952 or 1953. A group of families were camped at a late winter camping location *Gǫǫka* on Sarah Lake (*Gǫǫqtì*). The group was soon to break camp and move north to camp near the Indore mine on Hottah Lake (*Ɉts'èhtì*). People often traded moccasins, fresh fish and meat and other things to the mine staff in exchange for supplies of tea, sugar, and other staples. Two of the men, Pierre Mantla and Joseph Euski, left early to hunt caribou on the way. They shot six caribou near *Dàdlɻndiwodo* (a large island in the northern end of *SemɻɈtì*, or Faber Lake), made camp, and awaited the arrival of their families. The others soon arrived and together they spent two days drying the meat, during which time the weather warmed, flooding the ice with meltwater (*ɻze*; "puddles on snowy ice"), and preventing further northward travel. Mantla and Euski made two *dèchɻgètlǫ* to charm the north wind (*chɻk'e nɻhts'i*) and each family head took a turn swinging the charmers. A string is tied to the pointed projection at the base of the *dèchɻgètlǫ* and it is swung at arm's length around your head. During the night the north wind rose, blowing hard all night. By morning the lakes were again frozen and the group was able to continue north. The party made the trip to the Indore Mine in two

days by dog team.

When the *dèchǰgètlǫ* was found it created much excitement for the 1995 canoe party and after being told the story and how it worked several youth expressed an interest in making one.[70] However, the young canoeists were warned not to try as to call the north wind when canoeing could be dangerous. The story demonstrates how *ɔǰkǫǫ* can be used to call an atmospheric phenomenon—the wind—to help travellers reach their destination. As noted above, votive offerings left during the course of travel reciprocate for the gift the wind provided in this case. In a similar way, whenever a resource is taken or used, a gift must be left in exchange. For example, when collecting ochre to decorate a caribou-skin lodge covering in 2000, elders left gifts of tobacco. Failure to do so will often result in bad weather (Pokotylo and Hanks, 1989; cf. Goulet, 1998:62; Heine *et al.,* 2001).

The Fire

In 1996, I joined the "Trails of Our Ancestors" canoe trip which was travelling from Behchokǫ̀ to Wekweètì, following the Wecho, Yellowknife, and Snare rivers. Our group was large—6 canoes and about 36 people—and the trip was going very well. We reached Wheeler Lake and stopped to have lunch and visit the grave of an important elder, an ancestor of many of the people on the trip. After lunch, a feeding-the-fire ceremony[71] was held at the grave to honour the ancestors. The ceremony consists of building a large fire and offering food to the *ǰnì*, or spirits of the ancestors, as fire—a powerful entity in itself—is regarded as a medium or portal to reaching a world where these spirits dwell. Afterwards the group launched their canoes and continued to Germaine Lake. Just after pulling away from shore, a ripple of excitement ran through the group as someone spotted two moose at the end of a long bay, probably 3 kilometres away. Bringing the canoes together to make a floating island, the men talked about whether they should go and get the moose. Eventually

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[70] One of the elders recounted another method of calling the north wind: "With soft snow, sculpt a hare, using spruce cones for eyes. Point the snow hare north and call 'Let the north wind come' several times." I've never been able to find another account of this technique or an explanation of why it was used.

[71] See Legat (2010) for an extensive discussion of the context of these ceremonies. Though the practice likely dates from before contact the use of the term 'spirits' reflects a Christian influence (Helm, 1994: 77).

it was decided to continue, as there was much distance to cover before the next planned camping location, and the moose were judged to be too far away.

We paddled on through the next lake, following a long narrow still-water channel and wetland that would eventually culminate in a short portage into the Yellowknife River. For several days we had noticed the white and grey smoke of a large forest fire burning to the north of us, but as it seemed far off no one paid it any particular attention. As we turned into the long channel, the wind shifted and with it the course of the fire and soon it seemed to be right in our track burning towards us. Stopping near a large hill, several young men climbed it to get a better perspective on the fire's course. Cresting the hill they were shocked to find the fire roaring up the far side and all turned and quickly returned to the canoes. As it was too dangerous to continue forward and as our current situation offered no protection from a fire, we decided to back-track. Returning to Germaine Lake we camped on a large island near the centre, knowing that the vast distance between the island and the shore would protect us, even if the fire burned all the way to the lake. Since fire is a living entity (cf. Miller and Davidson-Hunt, 2010) several of the older men wondered if this was the result of refusing the gift of the two moose seen earlier. As it turned out, the fire burned over the location where we had stopped in the channel but did not reach Germaine Lake. A few days later the group continued with the paddle through the blackened wasteland left by the fire taking only a day.

The Bear's Dance

Walking down the esker slope toward the narrows at Daring Lake with Harry Simpson, our destination is the Bear Rock just a few metres from the water's edge. Generations of grizzly bears have used this rock leaving clear evidence of their visits in the form of individual, deeply incised footprints. The esker, created by the melting Laurentide ice sheet, survives as a dry river bed composed of silt, sand, gravel, cobbles and massive rocks—including the Bear Rock—piled high in sinuous, dendritic strings reaching for hundreds of kilometers across the barrenlands. Called *what'àa* ('sand piled up') in Tłı̨chǫ, eskers are critical to local wildlife as their windblown top provides migration routes in many seasons and relief from biting insects during summer, while its flanks provide grazing, denning, and nesting habitat. Grand in scale, eskers have been called the 'crown jewels of the barrenlands' (McKinnon 1983:44). Near the rock, the river draining Yamba Lake to the north has cut a narrows. Dene and Inuit hunters, drawn to the natural crossing during the

fall southern migration to kill caribou as they swam across, have left a rich record of their activities in more than 20 archaeological sites nearby.

Harry has shown me these rocks before, almost always located on a 'bear trail,' a deeply incised footpath left from the bear following a repeated and precise route. Sometimes the bears will use other large, semi-permanent features and in one example, Harry showed me a large cast iron cook stove left behind at a mining camp that the bear had adopted for its ritual. This bear rock—one of three found within a few kilometers of the narrows—is large, about 2 metres in height and more in diameter, and weighing many tonnes. A permanent feature on the tundra landscape, the rock is central to a dance the bear performs each time it crosses or approaches the narrows. As the bear's trail approaches the rock at the narrows it transforms from a solid, single path to individual footprints, each as deep and precise as the path (see Figure 16). It's as though the bear approaches rock performing a dance, stepping precisely in the same place each time, visit after visit, generation on generation, and in the process cutting his 'steps' into the tundra. Human visitors can perform the bear's dance by stepping in his footprints, though the tempo and cadence of the dance is unknown for only a few have ever seen the bear perform it.

There are two kinds of bears in the Tłı̨chǫ landscape; *sah* (black bears) and *sahcho* (grizzly bears) and though both deserve respect, it is the latter that are most highly respected by humans. Where encounters with grizzly bears are possible, the Tłı̨chǫ never utter its name preferring instead to refer only to the 'big animal' when necessary. In a story that Harry told me many times, the reasons for this respect are clearly evident:[72]

> Long ago on the barrenlands, a lone Tłı̨chǫ hunter was traveling by birchbark canoe looking for caribou for his family. One night two grizzly cubs came into his camp looking for food. His parents had told the hunter that you should talk softly to a grizzly bear, telling it why you were there, and who you were. If you did this, the bear wouldn't bother you and would allow you to go on your way. Instead of following his elders' instructions however, the man shot the cubs. With their last breath, they cried to their mother who came running right away. The man was prepared for this and launched his canoe. By the time the bear reached his camp the hunter was safely out on the water.

[72] From Andrews (Fieldnotes, 31 July 2001, pp. 15-17).

> The bear asked him "Why did you kill my cubs?" When he couldn't explain, she warned him, "Make sure that whenever you camp it better be on an island, or else I will visit you again." Throughout his whole life the hunter camped on islands and was never bothered by the bear.
>
> Many years later, when the hunter was over 80 years old, he went hunting alone. Because so much time had passed since the grizzly bear had warned him he decided it was safe to camp on the mainland, sure that the bear had either died or forgotten long ago. The first night the bear came to his camp and woke the hunter. "Do you remember me and what I told you long ago?" the bear asked. The man requested that the bear bite his head so that he would die quickly and with little suffering.
>
> People who camp on the barrenlands should be respectful of bears. Talk softly to them; tell them who you are and why you are there, and always camp on an island.

Hunters are always alert for bear sign and use a variety of techniques to ensure that bears cannot sneak up on them when they are focused on some activity. For example, when butchering a caribou on the barrenlands, a hunter will face the wind and set a birch fungus to smolder behind him. The smoke, carried downwind, is said to prevent a bear from sneaking up. Others engage bears directly in the hope of enlisting their cooperation, as in this statement given to me by Alestine Andre, a Gwich'in friend: [73]

> Before we leave for camp I am mentally talking to animals letting them know that we are coming and asking them to stay away from our camp. I usually prepare like this every year. About three years ago, though, we were visited by a brown bear. I am very afraid of bears, especially grizzly bears, and we know they are in the area and I always prepare before leaving for camp by talking to them. This day—the day the bear visited—I had a sense that a bear was near and when I turned around I saw it coming towards camp and walking along the hill near camp. I immediately went toward it and began talking to it. "Thank you for visiting, grandfather, but this is not

[73] From Andrews (Fieldnotes, 02 December 2007, pp.61-3).

Figure 16: Bear Rock at the narrows at Daring Lake. The bear's footprints are visible in the foreground leading to the rock. (T. Andrews, 2009).

> the proper time. We are still here and will be here for several more days. Please look elsewhere for your food. I know there are some nice blueberry patches not too far from here and in about 3 weeks we'll be leaving and I'll leave you a big pile of food." [Q: Do you leave fish guts?] "No! I leave my best dryfish—whitefish, coney, crooked back, jackfish—plus I leave them strips, backbones and some half dry fish. Usually there is a big pile. I leave them in the bush behind camp, right under the willows. Under the willows the birds won't get them—we feed the gulls and ravens all through the camp—so the pile is for the bears. So I continued talking with the bear telling him about the food we would leave and inviting him to come back later. About then [my husband] arrived with the gun and I said 'Husband, now it is your turn to talk to the bear'. He talked to the bear, too. Eventually, the bear left and I had a good sense—a good feeling—that it had left the area.

The Shúhtagot'ine, or Mountain Dene, have similar respect for the grizzly bear and an elder told me this story of his grandfather who had 'bear medicine':[74]

> A bear danced toward a dying tree and told [my grandfather] to watch as he cured it. It was from this experience that he learned to be a healer himself. The bear sings his song as he dances; he has his own song for his medicine and uses this to cure. Bears dance more in the fall as they prepare to sleep. I think their dance is like a ceremony for them. It's like they have their own spirituality.

Over the years, Harry has shown me that bears are quiet, focused, and precise animals. This is particularly evident in their trails which are always the same width and depth; always a single path that, unlike caribou trails, never splits or deviates from what seems a predetermined destination. Considered powerful and dangerous, grizzly bears have a focus that few other animal-persons seem to exhibit and for this reason they are considered wise and are addressed with the honorific 'grandfather'. However, as the bear's

[74] From Andrews (Fieldnotes, 13 August 2008, pp.10-11).

stories and rocks help demonstrate, they have their own *ʔɻkǫǫ*, spirituality, and a power far greater than humans.

The Animal's Gift

As Ridington (1983:59) notes for the Dane-zaa, a northern Athapaskan group inhabiting the Peace River area of British Columbia ,"[i]t was believed that an animal which gave itself away to a hunter in his dreams would eventually be encountered and taken by the hunter at a place where their trails came together on earth." In a pointed example of this relationship, Asch (1989:210) describes a hunting dispute between two Slavey hunters from Wrigley which demonstrates how a dream was used to claim possession of the prey:

> One morning, a moose appeared in a spot that was particularly advantageous to one of the hunters. He dispatched it and claimed it as his. The other individual disagreed. He claimed that the particular animal was his because he had dreamed and therefore predicted that the animal would appear at that particular place and time and would be shot by the other. The dispute remained unresolved, but, as is normal, the meat was shared between the families of the two men.

For the Dene, hunting is based on a subsistence technology that emphasizes skills over material possession, or as Ridington (1983) has framed it, *artifice over artifact*, and in this way dreaming becomes a critical component of a hunting technology. Technical knowledge develops through a process of *enskilment*, in which novices gain a deep perceptual awareness of the world through hands-on practical engagement in technical activities under the guidance of skilled practitioners (Ingold 2000), followed by years of perfecting their own capacity through the practice of daily life. However, as Ridington (1983), Ingold (2000: 294-6), and others remind us *techne*, the root of the word technology, comes from the Greek for skill, technique, or performance. Dreaming, though not a hands-on practical activity, nonetheless forms part of the hunting apparatus of Dene hunters. Dreaming is a means by which a person can communicate with other-than-human-persons, travel by way of an out-of-body experience, acquire special powers and capacities, and achieve tasks otherwise impossible for the corporeal body. Dreams permitted a hunter to receive other gifts from animal-persons, the gift of *ʔɻkʼǫǫ̀*; medicine power or knowledge (Smith, 1998). *ʔɻkʼǫǫ̀* is both a way of knowing and a way of being, and for those who possess it there is a duty to respect it and use it wisely. In speech, *ʔɻkʼǫǫ̀* can denote a

"human who is powerful, an other-than-human being who is powerful, or a powerfulness itself" (Helm, 1994: 77). Sometimes also referred to in English by the Dene as 'luck', 'intelligence,' or 'knowledge,' *ʔįk'ǫǫ̀* is most often acquired through dreams although other means are possible. Both men and women may have *ʔįk'ǫǫ̀* and their first exposure to it is often as youth.[75] However, success in hunting requires more than just the ability to dream and mastery of the technical skills of tracking an animal or operating a rifle. It also requires that the hunter demonstrate respect for the animal's gift, a process of reciprocal exchange (Nadasdy, 2007). Aware of human intent, other-than-human-persons have much more powerful *ʔįk'ǫǫ̀* than human-persons and, therefore, hunters must strive to ensure that they respect the animal-person's gift of flesh by giving respect. An important aspect of respect was not demonstrating hubris, or arrogance, toward animal-persons (see Tanner 1979 and Brightman 2002 for Cree examples of similar rules). Acting arrogantly about one's success, bragging about the kill, even talking about the hunt as an event, could be interpreted as an insult. In an elegant example of this, Monique, an elderly Tłįchǫ woman, recounted a story from when she was a little girl: When her father returned from a hunt he would enter the tent and take his customary place without revealing whether he had been successful or not. His wife would give him tea and food, but he would not talk of the hunt. Unable to bear the suspense, Monique would sometimes sneak outside to see if she could find small drops of fresh blood on his snowshoes.[76] In this way, through the reciprocal exchange of gifts with their prey, were hunters successful.

Conclusion

Many years ago, the museum where I work was planning to revamp its exhibits and had invited some local Dene elders to help us develop ideas for the new displays. George Blondin, a Sahtuot'ine elder from Déljne, was one of them and, as a frequent visitor to the museum he felt comfortable amongst the assembled group of hunters, curators, elders, and museum administrators. At one point the discussion was focused on how to balance the museum's mandate to showcase both cultural and natural realms—an example of Cartesian

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[75] The concept of *ʔįk'ǫǫ̀* and its role in personal development is shared by all Dene groups (cf. Ridington, 1983:60; Helm, 1994). See Helm (1994) and Blondin (1990, 2006) for an extensive discussion of Dene *ʔįk'ǫǫ̀*.

[76] From Andrews (Fieldnotes, 03 March 2007, pp.19). See Richardson (1851:16-7) for a similar story.

dualism prevalent at North American museums—when George decided to tell the story of the caribou boy.[77] Too long to repeat in full here, the story tells of a group of people living near the treeline engaged in snaring caribou during the fall migration. A young boy travelling with them had powerful medicine for caribou but because of his youth he had not yet learned the ways of controlling his gift. One night the boy disappeared. Checking near his tent his family noticed two sets of caribou tracks approaching it and three sets leading away, disappearing over the horizon. Soon, a large herd of caribou were seen and leading them was a caribou with a boy's head. The mother grieved her lost son and he was never seen again. For George, this was the answer for balancing the museum's dual mandate to display both culture and nature: A caribou mounted with a boy's head. Needless to say, for the staff from the museum unaware of a Dene worldview, the suggestion seemed peculiar. Yet, for George the idea was an ideal representation of a Dene worldview. George told me later that, because of this story and others like it, hunters never kill the first caribou when a herd approaches them for it would leave the herd without its leader (see Blondin 2006 for other examples). Like humans, caribou herds have both social and corporate structure and, like humans, leadership is important.

Tłįchǫ stories from long ago tell of caribou hunt leaders, called *wedzìihaat'įį.* Their *ɔjkǫǫ* for caribou was very powerful and the *wedzìihaat'įį* would lead the caribou hunt, especially at times of privation. This version was told to me by Francis, a Behchokǫ́ elder:

> The *wedzìihaat'įį* had powerful medicine allowing him to control caribou. He was always dreaming about caribou. He would dress in a *wedzìimǫ*, a male caribou skin allowing him to sneak into the herd to kill more. He was so powerful that he would sneak into the herd and make marks on a caribou's hoof without waking it up. He also wore a belt from which dangled antlers which sounded like clicking hooves of moving caribou. Dressed in his *wedzìimǫ*, his appearance, smell, and sound would be disguised. He would kill a cow so that the others, her family, would stay close, allowing him to kill the entire group. Only at special times—especially during times of food stress or starvation—would he use his power and dress in his *wedzìimǫ*. At other times it was carefully stored.[78]

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[77] See Blondin (1990:70) for a published version. Many Dene groups have a version of this story.
[78] The story is from Andrews (Fieldnotes, 17 June 2008, p.87). Compare Helm (1994: 89-92). See Andrews et al (in press) for a discussion of the Shúhtagot'ine caribou hunt leader, the *mjdzita.*

For many Dene groups, especially those who live within the range of the migratory herds, the caribou is regarded as the most important of the animal-persons, as it provides an abundant and predictable food source. Caribou are regarded as being very powerful. For example, the Shúhtagot'ine say they can ask the northern lights to freeze rivers for them during their migration.[79] Many groups find their identity linked with caribou (Sharp 2001; Slobodin 1981a). As Slobodin (1981a:526) notes for the Gwich'in [Kutchin, in Slobodin's quote]:

> Kutchin have a particular affinity with caribou. In mythic time, the Kutchin and the caribou lived in peaceful intimacy, although the people were even then hunters of other animals. When the people became differentiated, it was agreed that they would now hunt caribou. However, a vestige of the old relationship was to remain. Every caribou has a bit of the human heart (*edrìiʔ*, 'heart') in him, and every human has a bit of caribou heart. Hence humans will always have partial knowledge of what caribou are thinking and feeling, but equally, caribou will have the same knowledge of humans. This is why caribou hunting is at times very easy, at other times very difficult. All hunted creatures are to be respected, but none, except the bear, more so than the caribou.

These stories demonstrate a relationship between animal-persons, other-than-human-persons, and humans very different from the one prevalent in Western philosophy where Cartesian dualism of animate/inanimate finds no direct counterpart in Dene perspective. They demonstrate the careful balance between giving and taking that hunters must constantly be aware of, mediating with their respectful movements and actions in a landscape shared with so many other entities, all aware of his intention. As Smith (2002) has noted for the Denesułine:

> [E]lders suggest the view that a harmoniously functioning cosmos is a respect-based social and moral system involving both human and other-than-human beings …. Forms of disrespect cause chaos, hardship, and death. As one old man told me: "Even we kill the animals, they are our

[79] Hearne (1911: 327) noted that his Denesułine companions would say that when the northern lights "are shining brightly the deer are plentiful."

> relations; so you got to treat them just right, or it's like killing your brothers". To kill one's animal relatives in order to survive presents a moral dilemma that is assuaged, although not necessarily entirely resolved, by obeying the Old-Timer Laws, that is, the rules concerning respectful treatment of all persons.

To 'kill them just right' requires following a complex set of rules that balances highly valued personal autonomy with sharing and respect for a society of other persons—animal, human, and other—that one cohabits with. For an animal to allow a hunter to kill it, the gift of flesh must be reciprocated with the gift of respect, through following the rules established by *Yamǫǫ̀zha*.

In a Dene worldview—and to paraphrase Edward Casey (1996:24)—animal, human, and place are connatural terms: They interanimate one another. Through their interrelations they define a cultural landscape, one that recognizes agency of all persons, human and non-human, and one that contrasts with the modern Western concept of landscape based on the oppositions of mind/nature and animate/inanimate in a Cartesian worldview (Thomas 2001). Rather, the cultural landscape envisioned in the Dene worldview recognizes the interagentivity (Ingold 1996:129) of all lived bodies whether they be animal, human, or sentient place or other phenomenon—a totality of lived experience. Thus, a Dene cultural landscape consists of a set of relationships between sentient beings, all of which are regarded as persons in a Dene worldview. The land is an aspect of kinship. Importantly, this relationship has an archaeological expression and places important in past millennia can have continuing agentic effect over Tłı̨chǫ elders, but also their Western-trained archaeologist collaborators. Unlike a represented landscape, common in a Western worldview, it is not reducible to objects or entities and actions by human agents, the single sentient species; rather an Aboriginal cultural landscape is a lived landscape, animated by all persons—humans and others—dwelling in it (cf. Thomas 2001). Smith (1998:424) has noted for the Denesułine that "[t]he relationship of a person with [*ɔı̨k'ǫǫ̀*] and a helping animal is with the entire animal, body and spirit, not just with the spirit" and in this way, "[r]eality is at once material and spiritual" (ibid: 418). He defines this ontology as being monistic, as it "arises from the need to maintain reciprocity with human and animal people" (ibid: 424). Thus, the Dene live in a moral landscape, where humans and other-than-human persons interanimate their world, and where there is no human/nature dualism.

It has been suggested that the term and concept of 'landscape' is one that privileges vision (Berger 1972), one that associates consciousness with seeing (Thomas 1993). Here, however, it is used in accordance with the way knowledge is obtained in the Dene experience. When a Tłı̨chǫ hunter goes moose hunting he may have done so because in a dream the night before, his *ʔı̨kʼǫǫ̀* revealed where his own trail might intercept that of a moose. He might have seen a loon flying over head, holding its wings in an upward 'v' shape, communicating to him that a moose was nearby; he may have climbed a hill on a cold fall day to listen for the loud noises moose make, especially at rut, or he might have seen fresh tracks in the mud of mineral lick, where he might also have caught a slight odour of moose urine lingering in the air; he might note recently browsed shrubs and reach to feel their snipped tops to assess their suppleness, evidence that they had only recently been eaten, or he might test the rigidity of a track in snow to see if it had sintered, telling him that the moose had passed some time ago. Knowing from long experience that the moose will turn into the wind before seeking a place to rest, the hunter would feel the wind on his face, noting its direction and being careful not to let his own scent warn the animal-person of his approach. He might also remember that when he had last been given a gift of a moose, he had been careful to leave the moose's ears hanging in a nearby tree, hoping that with this action he would save the moose the fear it might feel should it hear him as he approached. As these signs tell him a moose is near, he would be grateful for his careful attention to the rules guiding his respectful behaviour as a hunter, knowing that he had done what was expected of him. Landscape is the inhabited place where encounters with other persons occur; where place itself can be kin, and where other-than-human persons area aware of human intention, and sometimes communicate their own. Landscape is a socially constituted place alive with the movement and actions of a multitude of persons, seen and unseen, where the signs of these movements and actions can be sensed in conscious and unconscious ways.

For Harry Simpson and the other elders who I worked with over the years, recording their stories and way of life so that this resource might be of use to Dene youth in the future was the main reason why they were collaborating in the research. They recognized that youth today live in a different world from theirs, one that is rapidly changing and moving further away from the bush life the elders grew up in. It was for this reason that the Tłı̨chǫ adopted an educational philosophy that recognizes the need to be 'Strong like Two People'. In this system, youth are provided an education like all other Canadian children in a bricks-

and-mortar school setting. However, by continuing to take youth out on the land through programs like the 'Trails of our Ancestors' canoe program, they can have the best of two worlds while still holding to their identity, history and culture.[80] For young Dene, especially those engaged in life away from the land, the relationship with other-than-human-persons revealed in the Dene worldview is critical, for it speaks directly to their identity. The stories define who they are by illustrating the vast pantheon of entities they share kinship with, relationships that sustained generations of their ancestors.

[80] The program is very successful and grows in popularity each year. All four Tłı̨chǫ communities have small armadas of 22 foot Kevlar canoes and some years over 20 canoes, each with 6 people, are together on the trip. In 2011, the Tłı̨chǫ offered a few seats to members of the public interested in joining the trip.

Chapter 4) The Doctor, the Chief, and the Trader: Tłı̨chǫ Political, Cultural and Economic Relations on the Eve of the Great War, 1910 - 1914

Introduction

In 1928, when undertaking exploratory fieldwork on Great Bear Lake, anthropologist Cornelius Osgood learned that the local population of Dene, the Sahtuot'ine, were comprised largely of a regional band of Tłı̨chǫ—the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* (literally "Bear Lake people")—who had moved into the area permanently in 1914 after abandoning trade at Rae, [81] which, until that time, was one of two primary points of trade for the group. In his Great Bear Lake ethnography, Osgood (1933:73) notes that they left "as a result of an epidemic of sickness there". Archibald William Boland, Osgood's interpreter and primary informant (Helm 1994:161) on Great Bear Lake, had been an HBC 'clerk and general servant' at Rae (see Figure 17) for the 1913-14 outfit year[82] (HBCA RG3/40A/2) and 'clerk in charge' for 1914-15 (HBC 1972), so Osgood had good reason to trust the observations made by this knowledgeable and well-placed informant. Disease was an aspect of the early trade, often with tragic consequences. An epidemic of measles struck Fort Rae in 1902 (Helm 2000:122), and a widespread outbreak of influenza killed 110 people in the area in 1928 (Helm 1981:296), among others. However, the Roman Catholic Church records make no mention of an 'epidemic of disease' in 1914,[83] certainly not one significant enough to cause an entire regional band to abandon trade at one of their most important trading locations.

If not an epidemic, then, what caused the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* to abandon Rae as a point of trade? I propose that two tragic and unsettling events, the death of Bear Lake Chief in September 1913, the result of a medicine fight with another trading chief, and the regional

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[81] Fort Rae, an HBC post on the North Arm of Great Slave Lake, was established in 1852 to stimulate trade with the Tłı̨chǫ. In 1893, Hislop and Nagle, free traders, established a post about 20 km north on Marian Lake, at a place known then as Willow River. Hislop and Nagle's trade was successful enough to cause the HBC to move to a location adjacent to their store at Willow River in 1905. Though the HBC cited a lack of firewood as the reason for the move, its fate was sealed when the Roman Catholic priest from Fort Rae began holding services at Willow River in 1902. St. Michael's Mission, the Roman Catholic church established at Fort Rae in 1859, was moved to Willow River in 1904 (Father Jean Pochat-Cottiloux, pers. comm. 1992; HBC 1972). With the move, Willow River became known as 'Fort Rae', and later as 'Rae', with the former location becoming known as 'Old Fort Rae' (HBC 1972:15). To eliminate confusion, henceforth I will refer only to Old Fort Rae and Rae to distinguish the two locations.

[82] A trading year was called an 'Outfit' and ran from 1 June to 31 May.

[83] Fathers Pochat-Cotilloux and Possett (pers. comm., 1993). The Old Fort Rae HBC journals for the period 1913-1924 have not survived.

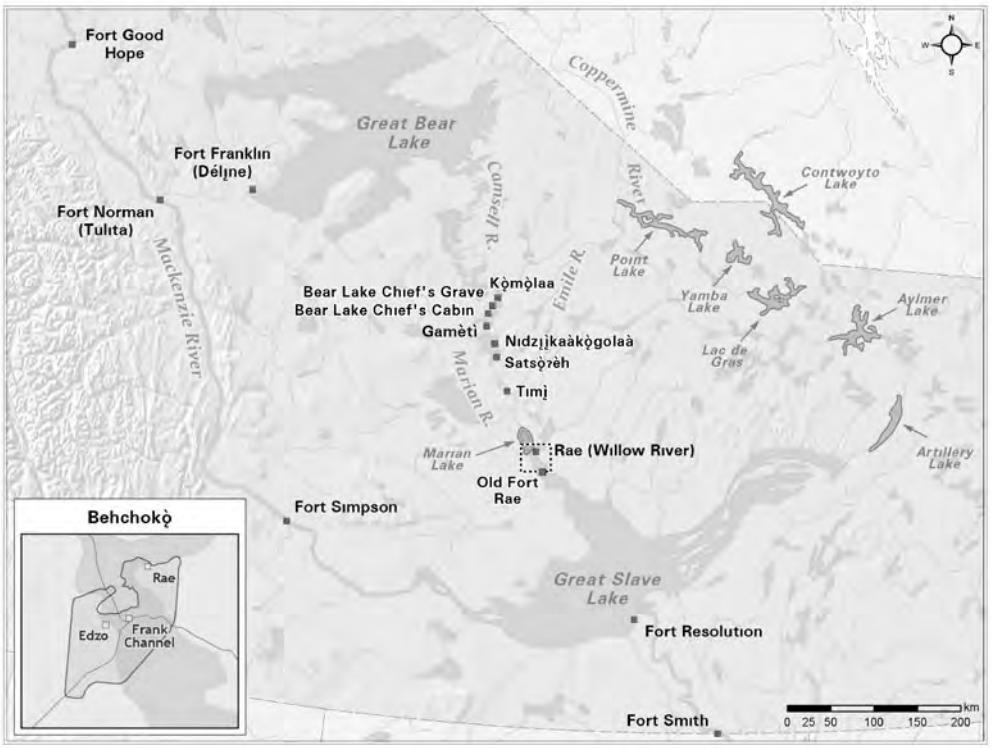

Figure 17: Significant places in Bear Lake Chief's world, 1910 – 1914.

group being refused trade at Rae on the eve of the Great War just a year later in the early winter of 1914, causing the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* to abandon Rae as a trading location. The evidence suggests that in the perception of the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨*, these two events were cosmologically linked, leading to a concern that their ability to live free from harm in the region had been significantly compromised. Since one of the events involved dangerous medicine power, discussion about it was internalized amongst the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* and traders at Rae were, therefore, never party to the real reason why they left. To develop this argument, using an ethnohistorical method,[84] I will explore Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition, Roman Catholic Church records, published observations of David E. Wheeler (an American big game hunter who visited the region twice in the pre-War years), fieldnotes of other ethnographers (Helm, Lurie, and

[84] In North America, ethnohistory developed as a largely empirical discipline, employing both documentary sources and ethnographic methods, to interpret Aboriginal histories in context of colonial realities and land claim issues (Harkin 2010). A hybrid of anthropology and history, ethnohistory as a field of study has served to assimilate an Aboriginal historical perspective that values oral and documentary sources with equal value, countering the dominance of documentary sources in Western history (Morantz 1998).

Gillespie), archival and published accounts of the HBC's response to the threat of world war, and archaeological evidence.

One of the impacts of colonialism has been the suppression of indigenous histories. Documentary sources of the last century, and the one prior, focus on the colonial masters rather than their subjects and, when combined with residential schools, religious imperialism, imposition of a capitalist economy, and all the trappings of colonial government, it is a rare occurrence that an indigenous individual's life can be explored through surviving documentary sources. When this happens, however, and when it is matched by a rich oral tradition focused on the same person, a unique opportunity arises to explore the life and times of one person. Bear Lake Chief is one such person and this chapter will also present a biography of him and an analysis of his economic status with respect to the fur trade in the years preceding the First World War.

The Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨

The *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* ('Bear Lake People') are one of six Tłı̨chǫ, or Dogrib, regional groups (Helm 1981:292; Chapter 2) whose primary land use area focused on the northern end of *ʔı̨daàtı̨ìi*, or Idaa Trail, [85] and the southern and western shores of Great Bear Lake. They are closely allied to a neighbouring regional group, the *Et'aat'ı̨ı̨* ('people next to another people'). For much of the time period focused on here, the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* also used the *Hozìideè* trail[86] to access caribou and musk-ox hunting and trapping areas at the treeline and beyond, into the barrenlands (Russell 1898:108).

The size of the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* population is difficult to estimate with precision. Helm (1980:267) reports that the entire Tłı̨chǫ Nation numbered only 711 people in 1891, representing a total for all six regional groups, though the population of the Tłı̨chǫ trading into Fort Resolution,[87] located on the south shore of Great Slave Lake (see Figure 17), may have been underestimated somewhat. Mason (1946:13), who visited Rae in 1913, estimates the Tłı̨chǫ population trading at the post that year to be about 700. Assuming that all six regional groups were of roughly equal size then this would suggest a population of 115 to 120 people in each group. Based on HBC and Hislop and Nagle trade records (NWTA N-

[85] The trail follows the Marian and Camsell rivers. See Figure 17.
[86] The trail follows the Emile River. See Figure 17.
[87] Fort Resolution was the district headquarters and main point of trade for the Denesułine, Yellowknives, and the Tłı̨chǫ living along the north shore of Great Slave Lake to the Yellowknife River.

1992-074) of the late 1890s and early 1900s, there were only a few 'head men' associated with the 'Bear Lake bunch' or the 'Bear Lake brigade', as the traders referred to them. These few names—Bear Lake Chief, Gon, *Yah-ah*, *Lazo*, *Etch-ah-who*, *Tenet-Tong*, *Teneroque*, and others—likely represent related male heads of large families making up the membership of the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨*. Helm (1968:123), citing an Oblate census of 1911, notes that 12 families were part of the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨*, while the neighbouring *Et'aat'ı̨ı̨* had 19 families associated with their trading chief, Old Jeremy. Helm (1968) notes, however, that membership between the two groups shifted frequently through time and, based on an average family size of 6.24 persons,[88] the population sizes for the two related groups could have ranged from 75 to 119. Thus, regional groups were not large, composed of related families following a trading chief, and had a fluid membership where families were free to come and go. This model suggests that the value of individualism, of prime importance to Dene groups (Helm 1981; Rushforth and Chisholm 1991), acted to control membership in regional groups, allowing individual family heads to follow a leader as they saw fit. Consequently, as Helm (1968) has suggested, the stability of regional group membership depended largely on charismatic leadership, a point that will be discussed in greater detail later.

With the establishment of the Hudson's Bay trading post at Old Fort Rae, built in 1852 on the North Arm of Great Slave Lake, the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨*, along with the neighbouring *Et'aat'ı̨ı̨*, spent less time trading at Fort Norman, located at the confluence of the Bear and Mackenzie rivers, though continued to visit the latter on occasion. Other posts—Fort Simpson, Fort Good Hope, Fort Resolution, and even Fort Smith—were also visited much less regularly, especially after the establishment of Old Fort Rae (HBC 1972). When Hislop and Nagle—free traders in direct competition with the HBC—established a new post at the current location of Rae in 1893,[89] the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨*, seeking the best price for their furs, split their primary trade between the newcomers and the HBC post at nearby Old Fort Rae. In response to this competition, the HBC set-up a 'camp trade' located directly beside Hislop and Nagle at Willow River, supporting it from Old Fort Rae (HBC 1972).

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[88] From Helm (1968:123), indicating the 1959 estimate for Canadian average family size. Data on average family size for the NWT in 1911 is unavailable.

[89] Rae was called "Willow River" in 1893 (HBCA B/172/a/2 f.25).

Gift-Giving and the Protocol of Trade

Long considered an institution of the fur trade, the pre-trade gift-giving ceremony continued to be important into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though presents were not as lavish as in earlier years (Ray 1990:5). In practice, the 'brigade'—a HBC term for a group of often related Aboriginal people led by a 'Captain' or trading chief—would camp a day or two from the post to ready themselves for the forthcoming trade. This would often mean changing into finely decorated clothing, kept for special occasions, and dressing dog teams with beautifully decorated blankets and standing irons. One or two boys or young men were sent to the post with the brigade's tally sticks, indicating the number of furs they were bringing in for trade. The runners also carried a small gift for the trader who, in return sent small gifts for the trading chief. Krech (1984:109-110) reports on just such an exchange recorded in the HBC Fort Simpson post journals of 1827:

> On 5 January 1827, Bedzebethaw, a [Tłįchǫ] trading leader, sent two "couriers" ahead of him and his main group of seven "followers" with a small stick notched with 180 "X" marks for the number of MB [Made Beaver][90] in furs they were bringing. The two asked for tobacco, were given three feet and some vermilion, and left the next day. One day later, Bedzebethaw and his band arrived with ninety martens, sixty-four beaver, ten lynxes, four otters, two large bears, two small bears, five hundred and thirty muskrats, and one wolverine; these furs were worth 181 MB.

As the 1827 account indicates, the following day, the brigade would come to the post as a group when the trader would give more elaborate and lavish gifts to the trading chief, which he would distribute to his 'lieutenants' or sub-chiefs (Ray and Freeman 1978). In the early days of the trade these gifts could be of substantial value as the passage, recorded by Samuel Hearne in October, 1776, at Prince of Wales Fort, located on Hudson's Bay, indicates. It describes a gift-giving ceremony with Matonabbee, a famous Chipewyan[91]

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[90] 'Made Beaver', equivalent to the value of one regular size beaver skin, was the unit of exchange in the fur trade. In 1893, a 'made beaver' was equivalent to about 50 cents (Russell Journal NAA MSS 1274). The transition to cash fur buying began in the late 1880s in eastern and southern Canada but was not implemented in the Mackenzie valley until after the First World War (Ray 1990).

[91] The Chipewyan, or Denesułine, are an Athapaskan or Dene group that occupy a region adjacent to, and south and east of the Tłįchǫ.

trading chief, who was using the threat of visiting a HBC competitor—the North West Company—as a way of inflating the gift (ibid: 199-200):

> Matonabbee, came at the head of a large gang of Northern Indians [Chipewyan], to trade at Prince of Wales's Fort; at which time I had the honour to command it. When the usual ceremonies had passed, I dressed him out as a Captain of the first rank, and also clothed his six wives from top to toe: after which, that is to say, during his stay at the Factory, which was ten days, he begged seven lieutenants' coats, fifteen common coats, eighteen hats, eighteen shirts, eight guns, one hundred and forty pounds weight of gunpowder, with shot, ball, and flints in proportion; together with many hatchets, ice chisels, files, bayonets, knives, and a great quantity of tobacco, cloth, blankets, combs, looking-glasses, stockings, handkerchiefs, &c. besides numberless small articles, such as awls, needles, paint, steels, &c. in all to the amount of upwards of seven hundred beaver in the way of trade, to give away among his followers. This was exclusive of his own present, which consisted of a variety of goods to the value of four hundred beaver or more. But the most extraordinary of his demands was twelve pounds of powder, twenty-eight pounds of shot and ball, four pounds of tobacco, some articles of clothing, and several pieces of ironwork, &c. to give to two men who had hauled his tent and other lumber the preceding winter. This demand was so very unreasonable, that I made some scruple, or at least hesitated to comply with it, hinting that he was the person who ought to satisfy those men for their services; but I was soon answered, That he did not expect to have been *denied such a trifle as that was*; and for the future he would carry his goods where he could get his own price for them. On my asking him where that was? he replied, in a very insolent tone, 'To the Canadian Traders.' I was glad to comply with his demands.

The origin of the gift-giving ceremony is thought to represent an Aboriginal desire to affirm friendship, mutual respect, and to establish diplomatic relations (White 1982), while reflecting traditional practice that reached all aspects of life. For the traders, agreeing to participate in this costly relationship served to solidify political and economic allegiances with particular bands, ultimately fulfilling the business and commercial objectives of the trade, while working to erode the competition's draw (Ray and Freeman 1978:62). Though the value of the gifts given by the trader had decreased dramatically by the end of the

nineteenth century, gifts still accounted for a significant part of the fur trade economy. Where Matonabbee's gifts amounted to over 1100 MB in 1776 (Ray and Freeman 1978:200), by the end of the nineteenth century the value of gifts had dropped precipitously. In the late 1800s, gifts of 50 MB or less were more common, though higher values were still sometimes given. Other trading companies gave gifts, too, thereby helping to ensure that the tradition endured.

As Ray (1990:212) has noted, Aboriginal people throughout Canada regarded the HBC's willingness to give gifts and to extend credit as a sign of trust. For the *Dechɉlaa Got'ɉ*, *Sahtì Got'ɉ*, and other Tłɉchǫ regional groups, gift-giving was an important practice affecting all aspects of life, observed on a daily basis during the course of travel through their environment. Extended to the newcomers—the traders—the *Sahtì Got'ɉ* enveloped the largely commodity-based transactions of the fur trade into traditional economic practice as gift-giving was already a significant part of *Sahtì Got'ɉ* culture. Through the ritual of reciprocal gift-giving, the *Sahtì Got'ɉ* mediated their relationships with a multitude of human, animal, and other-than-human persons—both seen and unseen—they shared their environment with. Through the gift of appropriate social behaviour, observing prescribed rituals, votive offerings made while travelling, and through respectful treatment animal-persons that gave themselves to hunters, the *Sahtì Got'ɉ* ensured their own survival, safe from malevolent *ʔɉk'ǫǫ̀* or from the withholding of gifts necessary for survival. The gift-giving ceremony at the trading post was, therefore, a natural part of the *Sahtì Got'ɉ* engagement with their world and the other beings they shared their landscape with, an ancient custom of gift exchange linked to respectful conduct.[92] In other words, for the *Sahtì Got'ɉ*, giving and receiving gifts was part of a broader theme of reciprocity unifying humans with humans, and humans with other-than-human beings, and extending this to incorporate the ceremonies opening each trading event was a natural extension of a life-sustaining social practice. However, the complexities of gift-giving are many and, as Bourdieu (1977:171ff) has noted, gift-giving can also used for strategic social positioning in small-scale societies. In this way, a successful, lucrative gift-giving relationship with the traders would allow trading chiefs to use this as a way of enhancing their own status as leader while, at the same time, leading to potential sources of conflict with competing trading chiefs. By 1913, the fur trade had been

[92] These themes have been discussed in greater detail in chapters 2 and 3.

active in the Northwest Territories for more than 125 years and the ceremonies at the post were by then a part of tradition.

For the trader, gift-giving was part of a commodity exchange that served economic and political ends exclusively. By focusing these sometimes lavish gifts on the 'captain' or trading chief, the trader raised this person's status amongst his own people, while at the same time cementing an allegiance with the chief. The lavish gifts allowed the trading chief to distribute the rewards amongst his kin and followers, much as meat might be distributed, showing him to be generous and upholding important values of sharing, leading trading chiefs to seek allegiances with the most generous traders, a feature that Matonabbee used so dextrously in the example given, above.

Despite the contextual differences, gift-giving was mutually beneficial, a ceremony of diplomatic significance and status, one that was made to fit within different economic systems. Though it began to decline in the late nineteenth century it was still an important part of the trading experience until after the First World War (Ray 1990).

The Role of Trading Chiefs

The position of trading chief arose out of the fur trade itself. Known in Tłįchǫ as *donek'awi* (also *ek'awi* or *k'awi*), which translates as 'people's trader,' in the years before Treaty 11 was signed in 1921, the *donek'awi* was a respected leader who was recognized for having special authority or power over the trade relationship that existed between the Tłįchǫ and the trader (Helm 1965). Trading chiefs,[93] though free to trade at any establishment—HBC or free trader—had a formal alliance with one or the other, bringing their quality furs to their ally. The role of *donek'awi* was fostered by the traders through the process of gift-giving and, in turn, the *donek'awi* helped to maintain authority through the distribution of these gifts. As Richardson (1851:27) notes: "A free expenditure by the chief of the presents that he receives from the traders, and even of his produce of furs, is the main bulwark of his authority, in addition to the skill which he must possess in the management of the various tempers with which he had to do." Though linked with the trade, the position commanded great respect among the Tłįchǫ and people often looked to the *donek'awi* for leadership in other areas of life. Though each regional group was usually led by a *donek'awi*, families were free to move from one group to another as they saw fit, reflecting the value of individualism

[93] The HBC referred to them as 'captains' or 'trading captains' in the early fur trade (Ray and Freeman 1978).

so important in Dene life. *Donek'awi* usually had one or more helpers, called *k'awo* ('boss'), who would assist the chief in hunting, distributing food to group members, and in the general management of their camps (Helm 1965: 41). The era of the trading chief began to decline with the First World War and the transition to cash fur buying which was more widespread following the war (Ray 1990). This transition brought an end to the practice of gift-giving and provided access to direct trade to anyone, ultimately eroding the authority of the *donek'awi*. The role of trading chief ended when Treaty was signed in 1921 as it provided for a new political order where a chief (called *kw'ahtideè* in Tłı̨chǫ) was elected along with a council.

The *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* trading chief aligned with the HBC in the pre-First World War era was known to the traders as Bear Lake Chief (Wheeler 1914a:61). Old Jeremy, a leader of a group of *Et'aat'ı̨ı̨*, part of a neighbouring regional group, was trading chief for Hislop and Nagle, free traders in direct competition with the HBC (Wheeler 1914a:57). Bear Lake Chief's name is recorded frequently in the HBC post journals that I have checked—Forts Norman and Rae—and Hislop and Nagle, as well as in the journals and publications of several visiting scientists and sportsmen, while Old Jeremy appears less often. Importantly, Bear Lake Chief is extensively referenced in the oral tradition of the Tłı̨chǫ, particularly the people residing in Gamètì, the main community of the *Et'aat'ı̨ı̨*. Other leaders—*Edzàghoo*, *Edzo*, *Ek'awi Dzimi*, *Mǫwhi*, *Bruneau*—are also recorded frequently in Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition but, in my experience, none to the extent of Bear Lake Chief. Why is this so? In the next sections I will examine the oral and documentary sources related to Bear Lake Chief in the hopes of gaining a perspective that might help answer this question.

Bear Lake Chief:

A man of many names, Bear Lake Chief is a difficult person to trace through the historical record. To the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* and other Tłı̨chǫ regional groups he was known as *K'aàwidaà,* which translates as "highest trader," reflecting his status as a prominent trading chief. He is also referred to as *Gots'ia Wetà* (cf. Helm and Lurie 1966:86), meaning "*Gots'ia*'s father." *Gots'ia* ('little brother') was the Tłı̨chǫ name of his son, Toby Kotchilea. As it was considered dangerous to mention a person's name following their death, as it might summon their spirit, the practice of teknonymy—naming a person after one of their children—meant they could be mentioned in conversation without danger. To the traders, and most of the scientists and adventurers he dealt with, he was known as Bear Lake Chief. In the Fort Norman and Rae church records he is referred to as Francis Yambi—his Christian

name—or sometimes Eyambi. Frank Russell (1898), an American naturalist from the University of Iowa who visited the region in 1894, referred to him most often as 'the Bear Lake Chief', though he also uses the problematic "Naohmby", likely a misrepresentation of his birth name 'Yambi'. In the anthropological literature he has been referred to by a variety of names which are summarized in Table 5. Throughout the remainder of this chapter I will use Yambi, Bear Lake Chief, or *K'aàwidaà* interchangeably, except in direct quotes were the author's eponyms will be preserved.

Cognomen	Source
"Toby Kochilea's Father"	Grave marker at Lac Ste. Croix
"*Gots'ia Wetà*"	Elders in Gamètì.
"Francis Yambi"	Grave marker; St. Michael's Church records
"*Eyirape*"	Fort Norman Church records
"Francis Eyambi"	Fort Norman Church records
"Bear Lake Chief"	Elders; HBC records; Helm and Lurie 1966:86; Helm 1994:123-4; Hislop and Nagle Account Book; Osgood 1933:87; Russell 1898:70; Wheeler 1914a:60-1; Wheeler 1914b:650
"Great Bear Lake Chief"	Mason 1946:14
K'aàwidaà	Elders in Gamètì and Behchokǫ̀
Ekawidare	Helm 1994:106
Bear Lake *denekawi*	Helm and Lurie 1966:86; Helm 1994:123-4
Slim *Ekawi*	Helm and Lurie 1966:86; Helm 1994:123-4
Ko'tcàtxa	Helm and Lurie 1966:86; Helm 1994:123-4
Naohmby, The Bear Lake Chief	Russell 1898:70
Whawhida cho	Wheeler 1914b:659 (transcribed from syllabics)

Table 5: Cognomen: Bear Lake Chief

Bear Lake Chief's Early Life:

Born about 1852 near Great Bear Lake, Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition is unclear whether he was of Tłı̨chǫ, Mountain Dene, or Slavey ancestry. Yambi's parents died when he was a young man (Tulita church records, Fr. Henri Posset, pers.comm.) and following the adoption custom of the Dene, he and his sister, Cornelie Tsekiate, were adopted out: Yambi to a Sahtuot'ine family at Great Bear Lake, and Cornelie to a Slavey family from the Mackenzie valley area. Church records at Tulita record his father's name as Joseph *Tcho Eyambi*, and his mother's as *Lane'imon*. Based on oral tradition it is likely that both died before 1860. He most likely spent his youth living off the land with his adoptive family in the Great Bear Lake region, an area for which he was later to be strongly associated with. As a teenager, he travelled from the Rae area to Fort Smith with his friend and future brother-in-law, *Sikoola* to work for the Hudson's Bay Company hauling supplies over the Smith portage (H. Rabesca, pers. comm., 1993).[94] During this time he developed the reputation among his own people as someone who had the appropriate knowledge and skill to trade with the white traders. As his daughter, Helene, framed it in the 1993 interview, it was here that "he gained the experience to become a *kaw'i*" and, perhaps, the beginnings of his allegiance with the Hudson's Bay Company.[95]

In his late teens, he began a search for a wife. The Mackenzie drainage Athapaskans practice band exogamy in marriage preference, and consequently Yambi turned to neighbouring groups to look for a marriage partner. One of the many stories tells of an early search for a wife among the Slavey of the Mackenzie Valley. The story, told by the late Tłı̨chǫ elder Elizabeth Mackenzie (April 10th, 1997; recorded by T. Andrews) has two versions, and recounts how Yambi found his long-lost sister:

> There are two versions of this story. The first one tells that when *K'aàwidaà* went to look for a wife he traveled to *Denat'ı̨*[96] country, he met a beautiful young woman and fell in love with her. However he was surprised when the old people told him she was his sister. When he found this out he brought her back to Tłı̨chǫ country. In the second version of the story he heard that his sister was alive and living with the *Denat'ı̨*, and that she was being mistreated by her mother, the woman who adopted her. She was just

[94] Helene Rabesca was one of Bear Lake Chief's daughters.

[95] Sometime after this experience he rose to prominence as a trading chief or *donek'awi,* though the date of his ascension is unknown.

[96] The Tłı̨chǫ name for the Slavey of the Mackenzie River area, meaning "people of the river."

> coming of age and this woman made her do many hard tasks and kept her in seclusion [a reference to the practice of seclusion at first menses] for too long. *K'aàwidaà* brought her back to Tłįchǫ country. Here the stories are the same. Once they returned to Tłįchǫ country he arranged for his sister to marry his good friend *Sikoola*. *Sikoola* and Cornelie had five sons. One of their sons, Jeremy, was my father.

Later, as a young man of eighteen or nineteen he continued his search for a wife, travelling to the Fort Norman area, this time with his friend *Nakwa* (H. Rabesca, pers.comm., 1993). Finally, at 20 years of age, he married Emma Kowea on 21 May 1872 in a ceremony at the Roman Catholic Church in Fort Norman (Father Henri Posset, pers. comm., 1993). It is here, in the Fort Norman church records that his name appears in the written record for the first time. The church records indicate that Emma was eighteen, and that both she and Yambi were baptized the same day. Together they had nine children. His children were well aware of his status as a trading chief. For example, in August, 1962, Nancy O. Lurie interviewed Helene Rabesca, his youngest daughter, in Lac La Martre (today Whatì) who gave the following account of her father (Helm 2000: 346):

> They called my father Kotchilea Weta, Kotchilea's Father. [Kotchilea or *Gots'ia* is also known as Toby Bearlake or Toby Kotchilea.] My dad was like a big shot for the Hudson's Bay Company. … My … father was called Ek'awi [Trader]. Nearly all over the North I think they heard of my dad.

Tłįchǫ marriage practices were often polygynous at this time, and Tłįchǫ stories of important headmen and leaders talk of them having more than one wife, sometimes as many as twelve. Tłįchǫ oral tradition indicates that Bear Lake Chief may have had more than one wife for a period of time. According to one story, the priest at Fort Norman refused to bless his custom marriage to another woman given that he was already married to Emma Kowea, forcing Bear Lake Chief to abandon the second wife (and child) and to hold to the Christian practice of monogamy. Descendents from this union still survive in the Great Bear Lake area (E. Mackenzie, pers.comm., 1997). Tłįchǫ oral tradition further records that *Nakwa* and Bear Lake Chief married sisters (E. Mackenzie, pers.comm., 1997).

In the spring of 1906 Bear Lake Chief's wife, Emma Kowea died and was buried on *ʔįdaàtʒ̨li*, or the Idaa Trail, between Great Bear and Great Slave lakes (H. Rabesca, pers.

comm., 1993). In July of the following summer, Bear Lake Chief was confronted by a woman on the steps of the Roman Catholic Church in Old Fort Rae, who accused him, falsely, of fathering the child she said she was pregnant with. According to Mrs. Rabesca, her father had not intended on remarrying following the death of her mother, but was shamed into the marriage by this accusation (Helene Rabesca, pers. comm., 1993; Helm 2000:146). On July 22, 1906, Bear Lake Chief married Marie Wetchowa, at a church service presided over by Father A. Duport (Father Pochat-Cottiloux, pers. comm. 1994). There were no children from this second marriage and the event provides an interesting commentary on changing *mores* of the time.

Bear Lake Chief and the Pre-First World War Fur Trade:

Sometime between the date of his marriage in 1872 and 1890, when he appears for the first time in the surviving post journals of the Hudson's Bay Company, Yambi achieved the status of trading chief, and came to be known to the traders as Bear Lake Chief. On July 4, 1890 the journal for HBC post at Old Fort Rae records "Bear Lake Chief & followers arrived this evening with their families and musk ox" (HBCA B/172/a/2 f.25). Though this is the first occurrence of his name in the HBC journals for Old Fort Rae, it is likely that he must have been regarded as 'chief' for some time.

The reference to musk-ox is important because it was during this period that the lucrative trade in robes achieved its peak. The trade in musk-ox was stimulated by the extirpation of bison on the Great Plains (Clarke 1940:5), leading the HBC to encourage the Dene (MacFarlane 1908:176) to hunt musk-ox. The trade in musk-ox was most important for the Tłįchǫ, Yellowknives, and Chipewyan whose traditional territories included the barrenland areas in the vicinity of Lac de Gras, Contwoyto Lake, Yamba Lake, Point Lake, Alymer Lake and Artillery Lake (see Figure 17), where musk-ox could be found in significant numbers. The HBC transported the robes east where they were sold in Canada and the United States as "sleigh and cutter winter robes" (MacFarlane 1908:176). Between 1877 and 1898, 5075 robes were traded at Old Fort Rae (Barr 1991:20), which became the primary point for the trade in musk-ox robes and over the 15-year period between 1861 and 1898 (Barr 1991:18). Indeed, at the peak of the trade, in the year 1888, 722 musk-ox robes were traded at Rae, and at the recorded price, the equivalent of nearly $25 per hide, the Tłįchǫ earned the remarkable sum of $17,710 (Barr 1991:20-21). Total fur returns for Rae that year amounted to $21,012, with musk-ox robes representing 84% of the total trade (Barr 1991:21). The extensive trade in robes eventually led to a drastic drop in musk-ox

populations across the Canadian north, leading to the imposition of some of Canada's earliest game laws in order to preserve remaining populations (Barr 1991; Sandlos 2007).

By 1899, though the price had dropped to $10.05, it was still a lucrative source of trade for the *Sahtì Got'ịị* and other Tłı̨chǫ regional groups. Ray (1974:18) has calculated that, on average, an Aboriginal family needed about 100 MB value of goods per year to survive, noting that their capacity to transport goods was largely a limiting factor. Based on Russell's (NAA MSS 1274) estimate that a MB was equivalent to 50 cents in 1893, the annual needs for a Dene family would roughly amount to $50 worth of trade goods—tea, sugar, clothes, tools and other items.[97] Thus, if we calculate that the $21,012 of fur and robes traded in 1888 was roughly equivalent to 42,000 MB, and that there were approximately 132 Tłı̨chǫ families trading at Old Fort Rae (Helm 1968:123), on average, a family might, therefore, have received over 318 MB (roughly $636) in credit from the HBC, more than three times their annual need. These estimates are coarse but they serve to highlight the prosperity that the trade in musk-ox robes brought to the region in the few decades preceding the First World War. It suggests that Tłı̨chǫ trappers and hunters were in a strong economic position with respect to the HBC and other traders in the years leading up to the First World War.

According to surviving HBC post journals, between July 1890 and July 1913 Bear Lake Chief, or his representatives, visited the post at Rae thirty-eight times, sometimes as many as five times a year. During the same period he visited the HBC post at Fort Norman (now called Tulita) three times, indicating that his allegiance was strongest with the traders in Rae (see Table 6). An analysis of the post journals indicates that visits to the post occurred every month of the year, with the exception of April, which corresponds with the spring hunt for beaver and muskrats, and of break-up when it is difficult to travel, and August, when the brigades were most likely on the barrenlands hunting caribou. The majority of visits occurred in summer (June/July) or at Christmas (December/January). Trips to the post in summer corresponded with subsistence fishing in the lakes and rivers feeding into Great Slave Lake near Rae, when dryfish would be made for use throughout the fall and winter. During these trips the fine fur trapped in the late winter, beaver and muskrat collected during the spring hunt, and musk-ox robes, collected during the late winter and spring would be traded and provisions refreshed. Following the August caribou hunt, the brigades would trade meat at the posts in September, October, and November to add to their provisions in

[97] Keeping in mind that the vast majority of food, tools, and other manufactured items were produced as needed from bush resources.

preparation for winter. Christmas trips to the posts were to bring in early returns from trapping, to refresh supplies of staples such as tea, sugar, tobacco, ammunition, and metal tools, and to participate in the religious and festive celebrations at the post. The Christmas trading trips were regarded as the most important of the year (HBC 1972).

In 1893, the Hislop and Nagle Trading Company, free traders in direct competition with the HBC opened a post at what was then called Willow River, the current site of Rae, now a suburb of Behchokǫ̀ (see Figure 17). James Hislop, who operated the Willow Lake post for 19 years (Zinovitch 1992) chose the location carefully. Located on a large point on the southern end of Marian Lake, the post provided sheltered and easy access, and was on the canoe and dog team trail leading to Old Fort Rae. Old Fort Rae was located on the open water of Great Slave Lake, a location noted for dangerous winds and rough water. By establishing himself between the returning brigades and Old Fort Rae, Hislop was sure to capture a significant portion of the Tłı̨chǫ trade. The HBC journal entry for September 28th, 1893, written by Apprentice Clerk A.F. Camsell, records the Hislop's arrival:

> Mr. Hislop, a trader, arrived here this morning with a scow load of goods he intends wintering at Willow River. There is no doubt about his getting the bulk of the furs here this winter, for most of the trading goods in demand amongst the natives is already given away here, in payment for furs given the Company last spring. Of trousers [?] I have but a dozen pairs damaged, while the trader has he tells me, over a hundred; in fact there is nothing here in store to induce the Indians to bring their furs... (HBCA B/172/a/2, f.22).

In his journal, Frank Russell, who arrived at Rae the same summer as James Hislop did, comments on the impact of the competition in inflating the price of fur:

> Very few furs were brought tho [sic] a large catch had been made. The Indians had received such high prices in the spring of '93—in some cases exceeding the value of the fur at outside markets—that they were not greatly in need of goods and then too they anticipate a boom in prices owing to competition in the spring as it was last year. They do not come with the fur until the lake opens in July by which time both the Company and the fur traders will have a new stock of goods brought in from Edmonton. (Russell, NAA MS 1274:46)

Two ledgers from the Hislop and Nagle post at Willow River, covering the periods September 26, 1895 to November 22, 1895, and May 7, 1897 to April 22, 1901, have survived (NWTA N-1992-074).[98] The ledgers indicate that during this period, through the combined force of preferential location and competitive pricing, Hislop and Nagle were able to draw Bear Lake Chief's trade away from the HBC. Table 6 summarizes the data surviving in the records, and it is clear that between 1897 and 1903, Bear Lake Chief and his brigade traded most frequently with Hislop and Nagle, though trips to the HBC post were sometimes included in trips to the area. This was the more likely reason the HBC moved to Willow River. Hislop and Nagle operated the post at Willow River, along with several others throughout the Mackenzie Valley, until they sold the enterprise to the Northern Trading Company in 1911. Northern Traders continued to operate the post, but it eventually closed it in 1938 (Usher 1971:52). Several other free traders attempted to operate posts at Rae over the succeeding years, and the posts changed hands frequently. In the end, the HBC triumphed by either outlasting or buying out its competition, which was possible due to its large infrastructure and capitalization which dwarfed its smaller competitors (Ray 1990), allowing it to ride out sometimes dramatic and catastrophic fluctuations in the market.

From the surviving HBC journals and the Hislop and Nagle account books we can also reconstruct something of the nature and protocol of the trade at Willow River or Rae during the pre-war period. As was noted above, Bear Lake Chief, and indeed all the Tłı̨chǫ regional groups trading into Rae, visited most frequently during the summer, and at Christmas. At both times the protocol of trade, long established by the HBC throughout its domain (Ray and Freeman 1978) still required that a series of gift exchanges take place to initiate the trade.

Following the initial ceremony of sending boys to the post with tally sticks and a small gift, the brigade would travel to the post. As they neared the post they would discharge several volleys from their guns to announce their arrival. This practice, still

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[98] Though the ledgers came to the NWT Archives without being attributed, by carefully analyzing the entries I was able to identify the two ledgers as belonging to James Hislop, recording transactions at the Hislop and Nagle trade post at Rae (Willow River) for the period identified. Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail the reasons why I attribute these ledgers to Hislop and Nagle, among other clues, they are of an appropriate date, record transactions with many recognizable Tłı̨chǫ names including Bear Lake Chief, record payment of wages to Vital Lafferty, a Hislop and Nagle employee (Zinovitch 1992), and record frequent reference to, and transactions of, James Hislop and his wife, Nancy.

Table 6: Bear Lake Chief's Trading Activity at HBC Posts (Fort Norman and Old Fort Rae) and at Hislop and Nagle.

Date:		Hudson's Bay: Old Fort Rae	Fort Norman	Hislop and Nagle Willow River (Rae)
July	1890	x		
Sept	1890	x		
Dec	1890	x		
July	1892	x		
Jan	1893	x		
May	1893	x		
June	1893	x		
July	1893	x		
Dec	1893	x		
Jan	1894	x		
Sept	1894	x		
Dec	1894	x		
Feb	1895	x		
Mar	1895	x		
June	1895	x		
Dec	1895	x		
July	1896	x		
July	1897	x		x
Sept	1897	x		x
Nov	1897	x		x
Dec	1897			x
Mar	1898	x		x
June	1898			x
July	1898			x
Sept	1898	x		x
Dec	1898			x
Jan	1899			x
July	1899			x
Nov	1899	x		x
June	1900			x
Sept	1900			x
Nov	1900			x
Feb	1901	x		x
Nov	1901	x		
Sept	1903		x	
Nov	1903	x		
Dec	1903	x		
July	1904	x		
Nov	1904	x		
Dec	1904	x		
July	1905		x	
Sept	1906		x	
June	1910	x		
Oct	1910	x		
March	1910	x		
June	1911	x		
Dec	1911	x		
Jul	1912	x		
Dec	1912 (1)	x		
July	1913	x		

(1) Bear Lake Chief didn't actually come to the post as he had cut his foot with an axe.

observed at special events today, was common throughout the Mackenzie Valley, as Russell (1898: footnote, pg.120) notes:

> At two in the afternoon … we reached the vicinity of the camping place from which we had started, and fired several rounds to announce our arrival. … The Indians about the Great Slave Lake still follow the custom of firing their guns at the time of arrival at, or departure from, the trading stations, or their own larger camps… I witnessed this ceremony several times at both Rae and Resolution.

Once the brigade had arrived a further exchange of gifts took place, and often the trader would host a feast and dance. The Christmas visit was somewhat different owing, in part, to the festivities common at the season. Russell (1898: 98 – 100) witnessed the Christmas trade in 1893 at Fort Resolution, when a group of Yellowknives[99] came to the post, led by trading chiefs Zinto and Black Head. His description provides important details about the diplomacy of trade, the extent of gift-giving, and the verbal posturing on both sides of the exchange. Arriving at the post on 22 December, dressed in their finest clothing, people and their dog teams came into the post grounds in dramatic fashion (Russell 1898: 98):

> Dashing up to the big house, with cracking whips and jingling bells, they crowded into the clerk's office to shake hands and give their "news" before going to the store to receive their "arrival gratuity," consisting of two pots—pints—of flour, a pot of tea, one of sugar, and plugs of … tobacco to each man, and a somewhat larger allowance to the chiefs.
>
> After their *festin* they gathered for a big talk. The chiefs seated themselves in chairs, the others sat crosslegged on the floor. Zinto talked half a day, using frequent and graceful gestures. The other chiefs also spoke at length, though of course a great deal of time was consumed in interpreting. Michel, the métis interpreter, translated Mr. Mackinlay's English into the Yellow Knife dialect, which in turn was interpreted into French, making a sort of triangular conversation that was rather amusing to me. Each chief wanted to know why the Indian did not get fifty skins instead of thirty for musk-ox

[99] A neighbouring group to the Tłı̨chǫ with a similar economy, but speaking a dialect of Chipewyan, a related Athapaskan language.

> robes? Why had he not received the gun promised him, or the suit of clothes, or other presents? Would they receive a thousand and one things when the steamer came in July? They wanted iron kettles, field glasses, rifles, match safes, goggles, and medicines, pencils and paper for writing letters in syllabics when sending for supplies, and if the master would give him some of his own tobacco, and a pair of his trousers the speaker's heart would be glad!
>
> Mr. MacKinley[100] replied that he was paying them as much for robes as the dealers in the white man's country received for them dressed and lined; that the steamer would bring an enormous stock in the spring of much better goods than the free traders could bring in; that he would give "debt" to help his Yellow Knife brothers, a thing which no other officer in the service was allowed to do. It all ended by his going to the store and dealing out a few skins of tea, tobacco and other supplies, to be paid for when the robes were delivered—if the hunter had been so fortunate as to secure any furs in the meantime which he had not sold to the free trader of whom he also endeavored to obtain as much "debt" as possible.

On Christmas Eve, Midnight Mass was celebrated at the mission, where the Yellowknives were "quite overcome by the splendor displayed" (Russell 1898: 99). On Christmas day the Metis and Dene "visited the big house and drank the twenty gallons of tea … they then moved in a body to the free trader's tea kettles, to the Anglican mission, to the school, and to the Catholic mission, after which they separated to enjoy a good square meal in the metis cabins" (ibid: 100).

Gifts were most often redistributed by the trading chief to others in the brigade, reflecting values and practice that guided all aspects of life. "[T]he gratuities from the traders are liberally shared with their followers, and the most eloquent begging is kept up as long as they remain at the post," writes Russell (1898:164). In 1910, when staying with

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[100] A reference to James McKinlay (1852-1913), Clerk in Charge, Fort Resolution in 1893 (HBCA Search File: McKinlay, James). Joseph Hodgson (1853-1934), Clerk, was in charge of Old Fort Rae for the 1893-4 outfit (HBCA Search File: Hodgson, Joseph).

Germaine, the trading chief for the *Dechɟlaa Got'ɟɟ* ('Edge of the Woods People'), another Tłɟchǫ regional group, David Wheeler (1914a: 54) noted that:

> Germaine had just traded a silver fox skin[101] and from far and wide the edge-of-the-woods people flocked to share his wealth. … When his visitors left Germaine gave each a present. Much of his lavish generosity was doubtless dictated by tribal policy. Yet Annie, his [wife], sent a plug of tobacco to Emé, a man who could not possibly make any return direct or indirect.

Hislop and Nagle provided gifts to the trading chiefs as well. For example, the 1897-1901 ledger (NWTA N-1992-074) records a 'gratuity' paid on July 13, 1897 to Jeremy, a Tłɟchǫ trading chief, amounting to 75 MB and comprised the following items: powder, ball and shot worth 20 MB, tobacco (10 MB), cup (4 MB), knives (2 MB), caps (2 MB), shawls (12 MB), tea (10 MB), dry goods (8MB), vest (4 MB), and a shirt (4MB). On December 28th, 1898, the ledger records that Bear Lake Chief traded marten and white fox pelts for a value of 14 MB for an equivalent value of cotton, pants, tobacco, ribbon, beads, soap, flannel and an axe. A margin note to the account entry indicates "23 MB paid in good will" (NWTA N-1992-074). Much of the value of this gift was bartered for additional supplies over the next several days. Twenty-three MB represents a significant gift, as musk-ox robes were similarly valued. Part of the gift exchange included a new set of clothes given each year by the HBC factor. When these wore out, then Bear Lake Chief would resort to caribou-skin outfits that he is remembered for (E. Mackenzie, pers. comm., 1997):

> K'aàwidaà would come to trade. He was always dressed in caribou skins, and with a knife sheath hanging on his chest. When he arrived at the HBC post he would be given a good bath and then dressed in a new suit of clothing.

Once trading had commenced, the HBC allowed only one person to enter the store at a time (cf. Russell 1898: 99). George Douglas (1914:258-259) witnessed this at Fort Norman, in July of 1912. His observations are interesting and comment on both the nature of the trade and the quality and cost of trade goods:

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[101] Silver fox commanded the highest prices in the pre- and post-war period and their value helped stimulate an influx of white trappers following the First World War (Ray 1990). In 1897, Gon, a member of Bear Lake Chief's brigade, traded a silver fox at Hislop and Nagle and received 130 MB in credit, worth then about $65 (NWTA N-1992-074).

> Once in a while a party of Indians would come in and pitch their teepee on the beach, and after getting a few things in trade, would go off to hunt again. The trading store was like a small, rather badly stocked country store. The quality of the goods carried was generally excellent, a feature of the Hudson Bay Co.'s fur trading stores that deserves the highest praise. Everything was very expensive but not unduly so, considering the difficulties and distance of transport, and the high quality of the goods: in this respect Fort Norman would probably compare favourably with the towns on the Yukon.
>
> When trading they allowed only one Indian in the store at a time; if more than one was allowed to enter the others would give so much advice that the negotiations would never come to a conclusion. Their behaviour in the store was exactly like that of uncertain children. I watched an Indian select six "skins" worth of stuff one day. He was fairly dazzled and confused with such wealth to choose from. He took a little tobacco, then came a long mental struggle between a black ostrich feather and a blue leather peaked cap. The ostrich feather finally carried the day, and he took it away in triumph.

The Hislop and Nagle records indicate that Bear Lake Chief traded very few musk-ox robes at their establishment while several entries in the Rae HBC journals indicate that Bear Lake Chief and his brigade traded musk-ox robes there in large numbers. By trading his robes at the Bay, and other fine fur at Hislop and Nagle, Bear Lake Chief maintained his allegiance with the HBC, while holding a relationship with both trading establishments that would have effectively doubled his gifts or gratuities, and thereby amplified his position as a trading chief.

Available records show that between the years 1897 and 1901, Bear Lake Chief visited the free traders, Hislop and Nagle (16 visits) more often than the HBC Post at Old Fort Rae (seven visits; see Table 6). This is noteworthy, as Bear Lake Chief, at least according to records dating to 1910 and 1912, was aligned with the HBC, representing it as a trading chief. The visitation records for the period 1897 to 1901 suggest an attempt on Bear Lake Chief's part to become the trading chief representing Hislop and Nagle. We know from Wheeler (1914a) that Old Jeremy was Hislop and Nagle's trading chief between 1910 and

1912, so clearly Bear Lake Chief was not successful in attaining this position. However, the Hislop and Nagle records have not survived for the period after 1901 so the date when Old Jeremy took on this role is unknown, but the records suggest that competition between trading chiefs may have been as active as between the trading establishments.

Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition indicates that some *donek'awi* specialized in specific commodities. For instance, while Bear Lake Chief traded in fine fur, meat, and musk-ox robes, other lesser trading chiefs, traded only meat and products processed from animal hides. As noted in the quote below by an elder from Gamètì, the distinction was a fine one, but significant in terms of the status of the trading chief. *Mbecho Kawi*, who was a contemporary of Bear Lake Chief, traded in secondary commodities only:

> The man they call *K'aàwidaà* he was a *k'awi* for the fur trader. So when he goes to Rae by boat to bring his furs, people would help him haul his supplies back. His supplies would be in huge bundles. . . . *Mbehcho K'awi* had a house there too. ... He was made a *K'awi* (trading chief) after they came back from Rae. He was chosen to trade for things like babiche, dry meat and tongue (Andrews and Zoe 1997: 170).

Joseph Naidzo's account of the three Tłı̨chǫ chiefs trading at Old Fort Rae, "presents an idealized view of the great days of the fur trade, when the Hudson's Bay Company trader and the missionary were the only white men in the land and three great *donek'awi*, 'people's trader', represented the Indians trading into Old Fort Rae" (Helm, 2000; see Helm 1994 for a discussion of Naidzo as prophet). It serves as an excellent summary of life in the years leading up to the war and provides an interesting perspective on the nature of leadership, the relationship with the church, and the protocol of trade. Naidzo was part of Bear Lake Chief's brigade, and was probably about 25 years old when the war started in 1914. Originally recorded in Dél̨ne in May 1971 by Beryl Gillespie, this abridged narrative is excerpted from June Helm (2000: 163-166), and was translated by Vital Thomas in July 1971. In this version, Bear Lake Chief is referred to as *Gots'ia Weta*:

> When the whitemen came, they made *donek'awi* ["people's trader", i.e. trading chief]. They made three *donek'awi*. Trading into Old Fort Rae, Dzemi [Ekawi Dzimi] was the headman, the head *donek'awi*, and the next was Ewainghon, and the third was *Gots'ia Weta*. Each *donek'awi* had a *k'awo* ["boss", i.e. assistant]. After the trapping season closed, after the spring hunt, before we leave for the fort, we would say, "We better send

someone to get some groceries". So each leader would send one man to get groceries, tobacco, tea to leave with the families [while the men went to the fort.] And when the *k'awo* returns, *donek'awi* puts the stuff in one pile and puts a feast up before the men go to the fort.

Everything was going fine. We had three *donek'awi*. They were just like the Mounties, we respected them. These were three gentleman, *donek'awi*. When the *donek'awi* met at the fort, the Hudson's Bay manager gave some side-pay to each *donek'awi*, gave them groceries. The trader gave *donek'awi* clothing too, a suit of clothes. He sure were treating the *donek'awi* good. And a big feast was put up for all the people. When the feast is over, the people started to dance. Once they started to dance, they went all day, all night, all day, and all night again. And on the third day you would see some of them lying on the ground, sleeping. That's the way we used to play! Not just for three or four hours. Sure lots of fun!

We had a good time in the old days, because there was just the post manager and his [Metis] interpreter and the mission [priest]. They were the only three whites. Later [about 1900] a few free traders came and some other whites. That's the first time we saw any other whites.

Everybody follows *donek'awi* in those days. Whatever *donek'awi* says, we do. Which way you're going to go to trap, to hunt, *donek'awi* knows the country. He knows where there are marten, fox, where you can find musk-ox. Groups of five or six trappers and their families would go different directions for fur. We used to get all kinds of fur in those days. *Donek'awi* used to bring all kinds of fur, many bales, to the trader. The more fur they bring, the more side pay *donek'awi* gets. In those days, it couldn't be better, everyone was so happy, everything was going fine. And then almost all the old people died and all the *donek'awi* also died.

In old days, you couldn't beat it, because *donek'awi* was preaching to us just like the priest does in church. And everyone was very happy in those days. … In old days, in the morning, at daybreak, *donek'awi* goes outside and yells

> to the band about which way we are going to hunt, which way to go to get furs. If we are short of meat, every man has got to hunt. Everybody goes like we are one. You don't talk back to the headman. But now who's going to talk to us? That's the way it was even before *donek'awi* [was created by the fur trade]. Everyone obeyed one another. Nowadays, it is not as good as before, because no one listens or cares for one another. Old people like myself who remember the way we had a good time way back, I bet they feel sorry. It's not their own way now.
>
> From now on, I don't think anyone will give you good advice, because the old fellows will be dead. But in the old days, *donek'awi* was with you. If you get a few caribou, in the evening *donek'awi* comes out from his tent and yells, "I want to see all the old people. Come on!" So every one runs over and we all have a great feast of caribou meat. And then *donek'awi* tells a story about how to make a living, which way the fish are running this time of year, where you go to find moose, all the things like that. He was teaching young and old. But, who's going to talk like that now?

Naidzo's account clearly indicates that a successful *donek'awi* would have needed to demonstrate not only leadership skills related to trade but also to hunting and other traditional activities.

Bear Lake Chief as Leader:

June Helm (1956, 1965, 1968, 1979, 1994, 2000) has written extensively on leadership and transitions in the role of leaders in Tłı̨chǫ society. As Mason (1946: 43) noted, "individualism seems to be the keynote to the interpretation of this culture," a comment finding its genesis in two important values common to all Dene societies, individual industriousness and personal autonomy.[102] In pre-trade times, leadership seems to have revolved around specific tasks and individuals exhibiting skill and knowledge related to the task at hand were followed by other in the task group. Medicine power, or ʔı̨kʼòǫ̀, was also important and individuals with powerful ʔı̨kʼòǫ̀ could be counted on to provide effective

[102] See Rushforth and Chisholm (1991) for a detailed discussion of Dene values and their persistence over time. The subject is also discussed briefly in Chapter 6.

leadership. This was especially true of caribou hunt leaders, the *wedzìihaat'ı̨* who, disguised in a caribou hide, used their ʔı̨k'òǫ̀ to sneak into a caribou herd.[103] When the trade economy arrived in the north, traders sought out these charismatic leaders to act as trading chiefs (Helm 1965, 1979) and over time, trading chiefs became a traditional form of leadership. Helm (1979) documents the succession of trading chiefs—Ekawi Dzimi to Mǫnwhi to Bruneau—even as the office was transitioning again to treaty chief when Treaty 11 was signed in 1921. In 1913, the trading chief, was a powerful leader whose responsibility extended far beyond just matters of trade.

Bear Lake Chief was clearly a charismatic and respected leader. This story, which addresses his style of leadership, was told by Philip Huskey in 1998 (Andrews fieldnotes, 1998). Philip's wife, Rosa is a granddaughter of Bear Lake Chief:

> *K'aàwidaà* used the trails to the barrenlands from *ı̨ts'èetì* (Hottah Lake) and *ʔı̨t'ǫ̀qhtì* (Hardisty Lake). He also travelled from the junction at *Weyìihàak'èe* ('blasting out from inside portage' located on the *Hozìideè* trail) which was his preferred route. He got his caribou hides from *Deèzàatì* (Point Lake) and it is here that the hides for the *ewòkǫ̀nı̨hbàa*[104] came from.
>
> He used four dogs in his team, which represents his status. Most others used three dogs only. People of the stature of *K'aàwidaà* were really well taken care of by the people around them. They would hunt with him and on Sunday he would prepare a feast for them. That is how he kept people with [following] him. After the meal he would always relay messages of moral values—shouldn't steal, swear, or use harsh words. This was followed by storytelling, about the last hunt, where the best places were to go hunting. They would tell stories for the rest of the day. It wasn't only the men who did the work. The women worked hard too, collecting spruce boughs, wood, snow for tea. They worked very hard.

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[103] The role of the *wedzìihaat'ı̨* was discussed in Chapter 3.

[104] "Caribou-skin tent", a reference to the lodge purchased by Frank Russell, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

> In the fall when the caribou start to move back south, the people would intercept them with bows, snares, fences,[105] and even the old guns. Hides, pemmican, bone grease, fat. *K'aàwidaà* would tell his people to make and save these things because they would take them to trade. It is testimony to the hard work, because they used the old tools to do these things.
>
> Because he was a *k'awi* he had hand loading equipment and necessary supplies, shot and powder. When it was time to hunt he would get his men to make the ammunition. Because he had all the necessary tools to make ammunition the people stayed with him.
>
> In his time they didn't have treaty yet. They would still travel to the posts to trade. He kept telling people that they are here not to take treaty but are here to talk with the other elders about where good hunting and fishing places are. After they had talked for many days, he would yell, "I've slept here for many days. I'm not sleeping here anymore". That was the order to go, to move camp, and everyone followed him.

The following story, told by elder Harry Simpson, tells of a young man who approached Bear Lake Chief to ask permission to marry his daughter.[106] This entertaining and humorous story also provides an interesting window into the marriage customs of a century ago:

> There was this young single man living with his father who was getting along in years at a village on Faber Lake. Plans were being made for the brigade to go to the post to trade the winter furs for goods. This was an opportunity for all the eligible young men to make proposals to parents of a girl they were interested in marrying. There would be a priest at the post to perform the ceremony for the ones that had approval. This young man made several proposals and was turned down repeatedly until there was no one left to ask. Sadly, he went with the brigade the next day towards Old Fort Rae and

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[105] A reference to the use of caribou fences. See Russell (1898:90) for a description of Tłı̨chǫ fences.

[106] It is used here with the permission of John B. Zoe who recorded, translated, and paraphrased the story in 1995. See Zoe (1995).

kept to himself until the brigade made their first camp at the outlet of *Satsǫ̀ʔèè*,[107] a fishing spot. The camp was set up and the nets were set and campfires were made as people settled about their fires.

Stories and jokes were told as people laughed and giggled around the fire, and expectations of meeting old friends were exchanged. A number of expected marriages were also mentioned, when *K'aàwidaà*, the brigade leader was told about the failure of the young man in his proposals for marriage. The young man was sitting at his father's campfire, quiet and sitting on his haunches with his head drooped, drawing circles and poking at the earth with a stick, staring sadly into the wood-starved open fire.

K'aàwidaà, who was sitting cross-legged among his audience around the fire, straightened and looked over towards the young man, his callused hands wrapped around his knees, back arched, chin in the air and eyes piercing and twinkling over the horizon of his massive cheekbones. His audience all hushed, their eyes 'looking at one another through their eyebrows with mischievous smiles in expectation of an event.

"My friend" he said to the old man, still keeping his eyes on the young man. "Your son looks sad when we should all be happy as we will be in celebration when we reach the post, and it is not good to have someone dampen our spirits during this trip," *K'aàwidaà* said. He continued, "I hear that your son has made proposals for marriage before we left and was turned down. Is that the truth?" "Yes" the old man said passively, "My son, he proposed a number of times and was turned down repeatedly."

"What did you say?" *K'aàwidaà* asked, as all heads went up and their eyes all settled on the young man, who was by now frantically poking at the earth, not knowing the outcome of this charade. "Did you say that your son was turned down in all his proposals of marriage?" "Yes, you are right, that's

[107] *Satsǫ̀ʔèè* means 'raven fishtrap'.

what I said, my son was turned down in all his proposals for marriage" he said louder but still retaining the fullness of his forced outburst.

"How could this be" *K'aàwidaà* continued. "Why wasn't I aware of your sons desire to marry. As a leader I have concerns that need to be rectified and this young man's self esteem should not be ignored." By then the young man's feet were taking little steps sideways as he sat on his haunches and straightened out a bit more with each word rolling off the tongue of the leader as he vigorously poked the ends of burnt wood into the fire. "I cannot allow a young man who is sad, and who thinks it is time for marriage, to be turned down and be allowed to travel with us in this condition," *K'aàwidaà* said. By then all was quiet and the only noise was the frantic poking at the earth by the young man to the point of the stick breaking, not knowing what to expect.

"I have three daughters back at the house and the oldest one who was married before, but not for long and presently a widow".... by then the young man's back was in full arc fumbling unburned sticks into the fire as the flames rose above his head. *K'aàwidaà* continued. "I want your son to take my oldest daughter as his wife, and should you agree, he could go back today and fetch her and we will wait here for his return," *K'aàwidaà* said to the old man. The young man was by then fully upright, eyes darting all over on nothing in particular, rocking left to right sidestepping around the fire with the imprint of feet following him clockwise until he was facing the leader, eyes bulging in anticipation, the corners of his mouth twitching. "Yes, you are right, I thank you for your words and my son is also probably thankful too for your kindness in offering your daughter to be his wife, and if he is willing we will wait for him here while he goes back to fetch his wife to be," said the old man. The young man was by then bobbing his head in agreement, and a mumble of approval rose from the audience through clenched grins. *K'aàwidaà* turned to his son *Gots'ia* and said, "Go with my son-in-law-to-be, back to Faber village so that you can verify the young man's proposal and my approval when you get there, so that they know the truth".

So *Gots'ia* and the young man proceeded to the canoe in a wave of supporters, giving encouragement and patting the young man on the back towards the front of the canoe. The young man sat, back straight, paddle ready in the water, eyes straight ahead. As *Gots'ia* was settling in at the rear, suddenly, the young man thrust his paddle deep and took the first stroke tipping the boat to the brink of capsizing. As the canoe bobbed its first hesitant glide in the still waters, the thrust of the audience's encouragement pushed the canoe further out onto the open lake. As the shoreline of the audience diminished back to the campfires, the event witnessed was told and retold into the evening beyond exaggeration around *K'aàwidaà* as he sat at the centre of attention beaming.

The young man paddled so hard that the whirlpool created jumped up out of the water and splattered *Gots'ia*'s paddle two to one strokes. When they reached and went beyond the point of land towards the final stretch, the young man could no longer keep his happiness within himself. He said, "My brother-in-law-to-be, I would like to sing if you don't mind". *Gots'ia* knew this young man stuttered and humoured him and said, "Yes sing your happiness, my brother-in-law-to-be".

The young man was still vigorously putting all his weight behind each stroke unrelenting. The sucking sound of the whirlpool provided the tempo as the paddle stabbed the water in time with the song. "Eh eh eh iwha eh eh eh iwha iwha eh eh eh." My song, it sounds just as good if not better than the fiddles they play at the post doesn't it, my brother-in-law-to-be?" the young man stuttered. "Yes my brother-in-law-to-be, your song sounds just as good as the fiddles they play at the post, if not better," *Gots'ia* said, grinning as the paddled quickly to the cabin of the unknowing bride-to-be. This young man married that summer at the post, and he fathered many children. His descendants are numerous today.

Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition contains many stories attesting to Bear Lake Chief's leadership qualities, marking him as a wise and compassionate man, a good hunt leader, and possessing the

diplomatic skills necessary to negotiate a bountiful relationship with the traders. However, as the oral tradition tells, leadership depended as much on a person's *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* as it did on his other capacities.

Bear Lake Chief and *ʔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀*:

In Dene thought, medicine-power, or *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀*, is a supernatural (Ridington 1968:1153) power that is ubiquitous amongst all beings at some level. The Dene believe that the life force that animates humans is the same force that animates animal-persons and other-than-human persons and, therefore, that all hold some degree of *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀*. The *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* of animals is superior, however, to that of humans, because they survive without the tools, clothing, and other trappings of human material culture necessary to ensure human survival (Smith 1990:157). Though *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* is "mysterious and beyond definition" it is inseparable from "everyday empirical skill and knowledge" that is "the outward sign of the inward gift of power" (Smith 1990:157). *ʔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* varies from person to person and can be acquired through dreams,[108] during which an animal-helper reveals itself and songs and other special gifts are acquired. *ʔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* can wax or wane, disappear entirely, or be regained later. *ʔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* is used to help ensure personal security in a world filled with hazards. It can help a hunter to know where he might find game to end a run of 'bad luck'; it can be used to predict or see future events; it can help locate lost objects; it can help win games or defuse dangerous situations; it can be used by some to cure or to harm. *ʔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* is secret knowledge so one never knows if another person's *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* is present or more powerful than theirs at any given time. As Smith (1990: 156) notes, "the phenomenon of the medicine fight can be fully understood only when seen in cultural context as a set of beliefs and practices related to the uncertainties of life in the subarctic habitat."

Clearly, Bear Lake Chief possessed extensive knowledge and skills, a significant aspect of his leadership capacity. However, Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition has also preserved several stories that speak of the nature of his *ɔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀*, revealing him to also be a powerful man. In one story, recorded by June Helm (1994:106), Bear Lake Chief uses his power to diffuse a

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[108] Or through drumming or singing ceremonies (Smith 1990:159). *ʔɟk'ǫ̀ǫ̀* was also discussed in Chapter 3.

potentially dangerous situation during a meeting with Copper Inuit, whom the Tłı̨chǫ occasionally encountered on the barrenlands. The bracketed text contains Helm's editorial comments:

> Toby Bearlake's father was one of the head men [*ekawi*] for Bear Lake. Ekawidare—'Slim Ekawi'. Tall man. [In a later year, Vital decided 'tall' was perhaps a better translation]. And he was a great medicine man so everybody was scared of him. There is a story about him. They [some Dogribs] made a trip to an [Inuit] camp. And in them days the [Inuit] had never seen the police or mission. They were just like wild men in the bush.
>
> And these Indians, when they came to [Inuit] camp the other two men said, "[Inuit] are dangerous. Let's don't go to that camp." But Bearlake says, "Might as well go. They can't do much. When I was young, I met everybody in the world and they couldn't kill me". That's what he got in his mind, his spirit.
>
> The [Inuit] gave them something to eat. Then the [Inuit] start a quarrel with them. One [Inuit] grabs a bow and arrow and he is going to shoot Ekawidare. Ekawidare says, "Go on shoot!" The [Inuit] tried and he couldn't spring his bow. So he throws the bow and arrow away and takes a muzzle-loader. And Ekawidare says, "Shoot!" and the [Inuit] points the gun but he can't do nothing. He tried hard but the gun started to melt. So he had nothing to fight with, so he made friends. So you know how strong the medicine Ekawidare got.

In another story, recorded by June Helm and Nancy O. Lurie (1966:86), neighbouring Dene groups were well aware of the potential danger of Bear Lake Chief's medicine power, especially with respect to hand games. The story tells of a hand game where another man with powerful *ɔı̨k'ǫ̀ǫ̀* outmaneuvered Bear Lake Chief, demonstrating that his power was not infallible. Helm's editorial comments are in brackets:

> The Dogribs never get beat much for medicine men [i.e., Dogrib medicine men were among the best]. There was a Bear Lake man who was the *donekawi* [trading chief] for the Bear Lakers. He was called 'slim ekawi.' He

was also called Ko'tca'txa. He was a big tall man. He was supposed to be a great medicine man and a good hunter so he was on top of [greater than] a *k'awo* [boss or band leader].

So one time the Bear Lake Indians came to Rae. The Hudson's Bay store knew him so that they counted him for [treated him as] *donekawi* [even though he was not the local trading chief]. He always carried a knife on his side at about his waist, held with a string that went over his head and one shoulder.

The Bear Lake Indians and the Dogribs were playing the hand game and the Bear Lake Indians were winning because their *donekawi* knew everything about *idzi*. The *Et'aat'ɟɟ* had joined the Bear Lake bunch and the Dogribs were losing. One-Foot-in-Heaven he too knew everything about *idzi*.[109] So he started to play on the Dogrib side and he had something in hand out of medicine so he is going to win [or so he thinks]. And One-Foot-in-Heaven's father, an old man, Txa'sɟa by name, he was standing in the door of the teepee, watching. That man was number one man for medicine. No one can beat him. He was watching his son playing.

So the Bear Lake *denekawi* was going to guess. Now, if a man doesn't know much about the game he will get killed. So One-Foot-in-Heaven's father was watching. He knew that the Bear Lake Chief was going to play tricks on his boy. He knew what was going on. As soon as the Bear Lake *donekawi* clapped, One-Foot-in-Heaven dropped back. If his father hadn't been there, his son would be dead, because as soon as the Bear Lake Chief clapped and One-Foot-in-Heaven dropped back, his father grabbed at the air and he had his son's *idzi* in his hand.

And the father says, "You guys from Bear Lake always make trouble. If I was young, I would be in that game. But as long as I am here you won't do any

[109] Players on one team hide an idzi in one of their fists. The object of the game is to guess in which hand it is hidden. See Helm and Lurie 1966 for an extensive treatment of the game.

> tricks like that". And the *donekawi* from Bear Lake was scared, because he knew there was someone better than he was.
>
> If that old man had not been there, One-Foot-in-Heaven would be in heaven! [Laughter] I saw the game ... it must have been back in 1918,[110] about.
>
> [A discussion of the points in the story with the narrator made the course of events somewhat more explicit.] Yes, One-foot-in-Heaven's father grabbed through the air [magically for his son's *idzi*]. If he hadn't grabbed it, his son would be dead. If the old man had missed the *idzi, idzi* could have gone some place with a power in it and could have killed One-Foot-in-Heaven. But the old man grabbed it and stopped it.

Bear Lake Chief's Trade Infrastructure:

The HBC and free traders relied on an extensive infrastructure to mobilize their trade to and from the Mackenzie River region. Initially, movement of commodities depended almost exclusively on sailing ships, dog teams, and birchbark canoes, traversing mostly 'wild' places. By the time the First World War began, this transportation network had expanded and been modernized, and the days of the dog team and birchbark canoes were starting to wane (Ray 1990). In a similar fashion, the Tłįchǫ also employed an extensive infrastructure to permit access to trading posts and, like their partners, used canoes and dog teams extensively. Traversing a vast meshwork of interconnected trails that reached throughout their traditional territory, the Tłįchǫ were able to gather valuable commodities and transport them to the trading posts.[111] As well, in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, archaeological evidence shows that the Tłįchǫ began to experiment in new architectural styles by building cabins and small villages at various locations within their territory, a phenomenon that spread widely throughout the Dene realm at this time (Andrews and Zoe 1997).

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[110] Note that the storytellers comment that the event took place in 1918 is incorrect as Bear Lake Chief had died several years earlier.

[111] The parameters of Tłįchǫ ethnogeography have been detailed in Chapter 2.

In order to support his trading activities, Bear Lake Chief constructed at least three cabins on *ʔįdaàtʇ̨li*, the traditional dog team and canoe route which linked Great Slave and Great Bear lakes, and the main route between HBC posts at Rae and Fort Norman. The first cabin which Bear Lake Chief constructed on the trail is located at a place important in Tłı̨chǫ history known as *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa*. According to Saxon *et al.* (2002:110) the name derives from *kǫ̀ mǫǫ̀ whelaa*, an old reference to the marking of burials with a grave fence, a practice introduced to the Tı̨chǫ region by Oblate priests beginning in 1859. *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa* is of historical importance because it marked the northern-most extent reached by Father Emile Petitot in 1859, who was on the first trip to bring the Christian mission to the Tı̨chǫ living along *ʔįdaàtʇ̨li*. He baptized many people at *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa* and erected a cross to mark the location. The remains of the cross were discovered during an archaeological inspection of the area in the early 1990s (Andrews and Zoe 1997). *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa* is also important for its later association with Bear Lake Chief. Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition records that a cabin was constructed here by Bear Lake Chief and a friend, named *K'anaɔeh* (E. Mackenzie, pers. comm. 1996). The squared-log cabin has dovetailed corners, measures 5m x 5m, and has a stone fireplace located in the northeast corner opposite a door in the centre of the south wall, which opens onto a view of *Tłeètì* (Lac Ste. Croix). The remains of dog houses, collapsed conical lodge frames, and other structures surround the cabin, indicating that the site was well used. As of 1991, the cabin was still standing, though the roof had fallen in. A photograph of the cabin taken by Dominion land surveyor John Russell in 1925 shows that it was roofed with sheets of birchbark (see Figure 18, top).

Bear Lake Chief's second cabin was located approximately 95 km to the south at a locale known as *Timı̨̌* ('where nets are set'). Situated only two days travel from the trading post at Rae the cabin was an important way station that Bear Lake Chief used frequently. Here the cabin has completely rotted away leaving only a foundation constructed from cobbles and local clay to level the ground surface. The foundation indicates that the cabin measured 9m x 5m, and was divided into two rooms. Again, evidence of use—collapsed conical lodge frames, stone-ringed hearths, metal and wood objects scattered about—is extensive (Andrews and Zoe 1997). Numerous stone tent rings surround the cabin site.

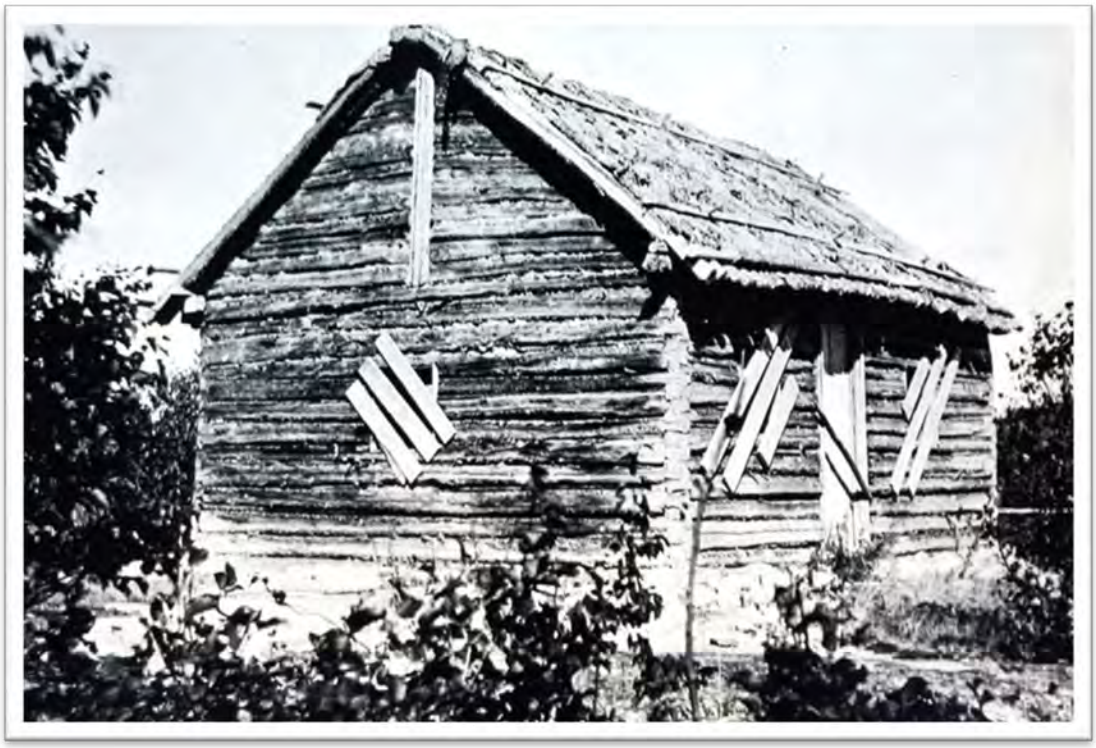

Figure 18: Above: 1925 photograph of Bear Lake Chief's cabin on *Tleètì* (NWT Archives N-1979-073-0397). Below: 1991 photograph of the same cabin (T. Andrews 1991/GNWT).

Bear Lake Chief's third cabin was located between the other two, on a large island on the eastern side of Faber Lake, forty kilometres south of *Kǫ̀mǫ̨̀laa*. The cabin was one of twelve located at the site, all of which developed around Bear Lake Chief's, which occupies a central location in the village. Known as *Nidzı̨̀ǰkaàkǫ̨̀golaà* ("the village beside Nidzi", a

nearby sacred site), the village was started sometime during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and was abandoned during the winter of 1928-29, following a devastating influenza epidemic which swept through the region the previous summer. Though most of the log structures have disappeared, their location is marked by the remains of large, and often standing fireplaces with chimneys (see Figure 19). Bear Lake Chief's cabin here was slightly larger than his cabin at *Timı̨ǐ*. The corner fireplace and chimney was much larger and more strongly constructed. Tłı̨chǫ elders indicate that this house was built after the house at *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa*, and the experience gained in chimney construction is obvious (see Figure 20). In many of the fireplaces, an old gun barrel is cemented in the chimney from which to hang pots over the fire (Andrews and Zoe 1997). The villages were used most intensively before and after the Christmas trade events and the elders' talk of many dances and feasts as the families would assemble, getting ready to travel to the post for Christmas.

Figure 19: Remains of cabins at *Nidzı̀ı̨́kaàkǫ̀golaà* (T. Andrews 1991/GNWT).

These villages[112] were an early expression of what Helm and Damas (1963) have termed "contact-traditional all Native communities." Not only did they serve primarily as winter quarters usually located near important subsistence fisheries or easy access to caribou, but were also used as temporary trade centres, where Bear Lake Chief could distribute the 'wealth' of the trade. Elders describe Bear Lake Chief hiring extra dog teams or canoes to bring the bundles of trade supplies to *Nidzı̨ı̀kaàkǫ̀golaà*.

In an interview with Tłı̨chǫ elders Philip and Rosa Huskey in May, 1998[113], Mr. Huskey commented on Bear Lake Chief strategically placing his cabins to take advantage of game and other resources (Andrews, Fieldnotes, 1998):

> Because he was a *k'awi,* he thought of many things and was considered smart and very knowledgeable. He strategically placed his cabins. Near his house at *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa* was an excellent fishing place. It was also a strategic place for the caribou migration. We should work towards preserving this important place. He is important to our history, and we should protect his cabin.

Given the amount of credit available to the Tłı̨chǫ during the heyday of the musk-ox trade, Andrews and Zoe (1997) have suggested that these places provided a convenient location to store the wealth of material goods purchased at the trading posts which were impossible to carry when the brigade was hunting or travelling. For example, during an archaeological inspection of the site in 1991 (see Andrews and Zoe 1997), the remains of several pairs of ladies, fancy laced, high heel shoes, of a style common at the turn of the century were noted. Though these might be useful at a dance or a feast on the wood floors of the trader's house, they were useless in the bush, and consequently 'stored' at *Nidzı̨ı̀kaàkǫ̀golaà*, until the next trip to the post. They also suggest how the massive surplus of credit gained through the musk-ox trade might have been spent.

The location of Bear Lake Chief's cabin also serves to underscore the important role that *ʔı̨daàtı̨̀li*, or Idaa Trail, played in Tłı̨chǫ landscape use (Andrews and Zoe 1997; Chapter 2). Central to a vast harvesting region, this trail served as a trunk road providing access via numerous branching trails. Archaeological research potential of the trail for addressing

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[112] There were three others on the trail though none of these were directly associated with Bear Lake Chief (see Andrews and Zoe 1997).

[113] Andrews, fieldnotes, 1998. The interview was translated by John B. Zoe.

landscape use is immense, as are the cabins and villages for examining the intersection of Tłı̨chǫ and Canadian economies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's.

Figure 20: Remains of a chimney at *Nidzı̨ǐkaàkǫ̀golaà* (T.Andrews 1991/GNWT).

Bear Lake Chief and the Scientists, Adventurers and Big Game Hunters:

As a prominent *donek'awi*, Bear Lake Chief's expertise was frequently sought by important visitors to the region resulting in his personal relationship with several scientists, adventurers, and big game hunters, some of which developed into close friendships. Clearly Bear Lake Chief was regarded by the traders as being knowledgeable, trustworthy, and patient with outsiders. They told Frank Russell (1898:70) this soon after he arrived at Old Fort Rae in 1893, who noted that Bear Lake Chief "was said to be the most intelligent and the most obliging of the Dog Rib leaders". Over the next 20 years, after meeting Russell, he was to come into contact with two other prominent American visitors: Edward Alexander Preble, a biologist, and David E. Wheeler, a big game hunter. All have recorded their

meetings with Bear Lake Chief in the journals and published accounts which result from these expeditions and from these we can learn a great deal about Bear Lake Chief's seasonal round, his preferred routes to the barrenlands, knowledge about musk-ox distribution and behaviour, and numerous other aspects of his life and personality.

Bear Lake Chief and the Naturalist:

Frank Russell (1868-1903) was born on a farm in Webster County, Iowa on August 26, 1868. He entered the University of Iowa in the fall of 1888, supporting himself through four years of school by working as a self-taught portrait artist (Schrimper 1992). In 1891, Russell participated in a University of Iowa expedition to collect bird specimens on the northern shores of Lake Winnipeg where he chanced to meet Roderick MacFarlane, then Chief Factor of the New Caledonia District of the Hudson's Bay Company (Schrimper 1992; HBCA Search file: 'McFarlane, Roderick'). MacFarlane, himself a noted ornithologist who had made significant collections of bird skins and ethnographic objects for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC and the Royal Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, was impressed with the Iowa team and urged them to make an expedition to the Far North (Schrimper 1992). The Board of Regents of the University of Iowa agreed to support an expedition and Russell left for Grand Rapids[114] in August, 1892.

After spending a winter learning the techniques of travel by dog team and winter survival in Grand Rapids, Russell left for the far north in February and reached Old Fort Rae in 7 July, 1893 (Russell 1898). Though identified as a naturalist with broad responsibilities for collecting both natural history and ethnographic objects for the Natural History Museum at the University of Iowa, Russell's most personal interest was in hunting musk-ox and returning complete skins to Iowa for mounting (Schrimper 1992). Russell spent the next year at Old Fort Rae, making several short trips to explore the barrenlands and other trading posts near to Old Fort Rae. In spring of 1894 he tried unsuccessfully several times to attach himself to a group of Tłįchǫ hunters heading out to the barrens for musk-ox. Finally, on 5 March, 1894, he was successful and headed north with Johnnie Cohoyla, part of Jimmie's[115]

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[114] Grand Rapids was an HBC post on the north-western shore of Lake Winnipeg where the Saskatchewan River enters the lake.

[115] This is Russell's name for a prominent chief known to the Tłįchǫ as *Ekawi Dzimi*. He was a great trading chief who stayed in a position of authority for more than 35 years, finally designating *Mǫwhi* to replace him in 1902. *Mǫwhi* signed Treaty 11 in 1921 on behalf of the Tłįchǫ groups trading into Old Fort Rae (Helm 1979).

brigade (Russell 1898: 108). Over the next two months, Russell hunted with the brigade in the area between the Coppermine River, Yamba Lake, Contwoyto Lake, and Lac de Gras. The Tłįchǫ practice of hunting musk-ox was running their teams to the point where any further would set the musk-ox running. Here, the Tłįchǫ stopped and unharnessed their dogs which would quickly run to the herd causing it to form the classic defensive circle that musk-ox are so well-known for. In the meantime, the hunters would put on their snowshoes, take their guns, ammunition, and knife and run to the herd where it was quickly dispatched. The Tłįchǫ hunters were more fit than Russell and would outrun him, killing all of the musk-ox before he arrived. This happened on several occasions and Russell's frustration grew to the point where he finally raged that "I started forward with little hope of killing any musk-ox, but in excellent humor for slaughtering a few Dog Rib" (Russell 1896:242; 1898:118; cf. NAA MS 1274 f.132). Eventually, Russell was able to kill his own musk-ox. At the end of the musk-ox hunt, after just arriving back at Old Fort Rae, Russell (NAA MS 1240 f.140) wrote the following summary in his journal on May 5th: "The musk-ox hunt is over and five complete skins lie beside me. They have cost two years of my life, two months of labor, cold, hunger, thirst and fatigue. I have traveled 800 miles in these two months." Unbeknownst to Russell at the time, he also contracted tuberculosis (TB) at some point during his trip north, a disease that would take his life within a decade.

Russell left Rae and travelled down the Mackenzie River to Pauline Cove on Herschel Island, where the steamer, *Jeannette* brought him to San Francisco. He returned to Iowa City on 2 November 1894 to a hero's welcome: the University's president gave him his house for the night. Russell completed his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1898 and married Theresa Peet in June 1900. With his health failing due to TB, the Russell's moved to southern Arizona in 1901, where he undertook extensive field studies of the Pima and Papago, work that was published posthumously in 1905 to great acclaim (Schrimper 1992). Eventually, at only 35 years old, he succumbed to TB on 7 November 1903.

Russell and Bear Lake Chief first met on July 15, 1893 when Russell sought advice on the distribution of game and travel conditions. Russell records his first meeting with Bear Lake Chief in his journal (NAA MS 1274, f.13):

> Have just concluded a two hour's talk with "The Bear Lake Chief"—Noahmby, who tells me that … [i]t is 15 days to the reindeer, [t]he Coppermine cannot be descended for more than two day's travel from where he crosses it when going for musk-ox, [and no] Indian would

> accompany me on a trip down it. His brigade never saw the Arctic, and do not know of any birding places for northern birds.

Though Russell collected over 600 natural history specimens during this expedition (Schrimper 1992), he was most interested in big game. Most of his collecting forays were to hunt caribou, bison, or musk-ox. Indeed, it was musk-ox hunting which consumed the greatest amount of time—over eight months—and required the most difficult and lengthy travel (over 800 miles), most of it by dog team. It is not surprising then, that significant portions of his published accounts—in particular Russell (1896)—and his journal describe these hunting activities, presenting information he gathered about the distribution and behaviour of musk-oxen. Anxious to get underway to begin his natural history collections soon after his arrival at Old Fort Rae, Russell tried to engage Bear Lake Chief and a guide to take him into the barrenlands. His attempts were unsuccessful and foreshadowed similar unsuccessful attempts to engage other trading chiefs the following spring (Russell 1898:71):

> "Naohmby, 'The Bear Lake Chief' … had superstitious scruples about admitting a Mollah (White Man) into their hunting grounds. I afterwards learned that he thought, as did *all* the Indians of the North, that if I sent down skins of the caribou to be mounted in my country, they would live there forever; which happy fate would induce all the vast herds that roam over the Barren Ground to migrate southward to join them.[116] I did not know at the time why he found so many trivial excuses for not accepting the terms offered him—his young men already had their canoes loaded. Andrew[117] and I could not paddle alone because there were many dangerous rapids. They would have to starve two weeks before reaching the caribou, which were so far away that I would lose courage altogether. His health was not good and perhaps he would stop somewhere and fish instead of making the long trip after the caribou.

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[116] This widely-held Dene belief has been noted several times in the literature. For example, one expedition, led by Charles Jesse "Buffalo" Jones, to transport five live musk-ox calves to the United States, ended when Chipewyan hunters killed the captive musk-ox by slitting their throats at night, while Jones slept, for fear that it would impact the rest of the population (Inman 1899: 378, 391-3).

[117] Russell engaged Andrew Leviolette, a young Metis man living at Old Fort Rae, as his travelling partner and assistant at the rate of 1 MB per day, plus board (Russell 1898:68).

> He said that they had all decided not to make their usual fall hunt for musk-ox, as the days were so short and the season so stormy, that it was altogether too dangerous an undertaking now that they had to go so far out from the timber. Five or six years ago, the musk-ox were found west of the Coppermine River, where a few clumps of stunted spruce maintain a foothold in protected situations, but each year the hunters had to penetrate farther into the Barren Ground,[118] and at least one of their number had been stricken with paralysis upon each trip. Three years before a hunter had been lost in a storm and never found.[119] They had therefore decided to hunt musk-ox in the spring only. This was a great disappointment to me as I had expected to engage in this hunt during November and be prepared for an early start for the Coppermine the next spring. Naohmby also discouraged my plan. None of his people ever saw the Arctic Sea; they were afraid of the [Inuit]. They could not descend the Coppermine more than one day's travel from the point where they crossed it on the way to the musk-ox country. None of his brigade would accompany down the river. Nor did he know of any locality where nests and eggs of water birds could be obtained.

Probably the most important and enduring contact Russell had with Bear Lake Chief took place on July 18, 1893 at Old Fort Rae, when they met to negotiate the price of several pieces of equipment essential for Russell's well-being while travelling in Tłįchǫ country. In his handwritten journal, purchased by the Smithsonian Institution in 1901, Russell notes that he purchased a caribou-skin lodge, a birchbark canoe, and a dog team. He also recorded the price he paid for these objects: for the lodge he paid $25.00, a price equivalent to that of a musk ox robe traded at Hudson Bay post; the 15-foot birchbark canoe was priced at $5.00, while the dog team brought $16.00 (NAA MS 1274 f.14).

With these objects, Russell was prepared to travel as the Tłįchǫ did and he used them during his stay in the far north. The lodge survived his travels and returned with him to Iowa, where it was put in storage at the Natural History Museum at the University of Iowa. In 1996, with the assistance of the late anthropologist June Helm, the museum gifted

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[118] This suggests that by 1893 the trade in musk-ox robes was having a direct impact on musk-ox numbers. See Barr (1991) for a detailed discussion.

[119] This story survives today in Tłįchǫ oral tradition (Joseph Suzi Mackenzie, pers. comm.., 1996; Vukson 2011).

the lodge to the Tłı̨chǫ and other people of the Northwest Territories and was shipped to Yellowknife to be placed in the care of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. [120] '

The next spring, keeping a promise to let Russell join him on his musk-ox hunt, Bear Lake Chief sent a message to Russell at Old Fort Rae inviting him to his camp. However, Russell (1898:108) refused the invitation noting:

> Naohmby sent a message to the effect that I might come to his camp if I wished. True, he promised to take me to the musk-ox, but he and his followers were starving and it was doubtful if they could kill any caribou for the hunt. This was not encouraging, and as I knew that Naohmby really followed the longest route to the Barren Ground, reaching it at a point northeast of the Great Bear Lake,[121] I gave up the plan of accompanying him and determined to pounce upon the first band of Dog Ribs which made its appearance at Rae.

Russell and Bear Lake Chief would never meet again, though the caribou-skin lodge that now resides in the care of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, serves as a lasting legacy of their relationship.

Bear Lake Chief and the Biologist:

Born in Somerville, Massachusetts, Edward Alexander Preble (1871-1957), was a naturalist who conducted field investigations of the birds and mammals throughout North American including the Canadian north in 1903-4. In 1892, Preble was appointed a Field Naturalist with the US Bureau of Biological Survey, promoted to Assistant Biologist in 1902, Biologist in 1924, and Senior Biologist in 1928 (SIA RU7252). In 1925, he was appointed as consulting naturalist for Nature Magazine and, later, after retiring from government service, he served as the magazine's Associate Editor until his death in 1957. Working on behalf of the US Bureau of Biological Survey, Preble traveled to the Mackenzie Valley area in the summer of 1903 to conduct a biological survey of the region (Preble 1908).

Upon his arrival at Old Fort Rae, Preble met with Bear Lake Chief in order to seek his advice on the best route for reaching the Coppermine River. As recorded in Preble's diary

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[120] The repatriation and related cultural revitalization projects inspired by Bear Lake Chief's lodge are described in detail in chapter 6.

[121] This is likely a reference to the Emile River route, known as *Hozìideè* ('barrenlands river').

entry for July 27th, 1903 (SIA RU7252/Box No.11/Folder 5: 1901, 1903-04 Diary and Notebook) the meeting provided much important information about the route. The diary entry also conveys Preble's high opinion of Bear Lake Chief, and serves to underscore the perception that many had of him:

> Had a conference with the Bear Lake Chief a man of a good deal of intelligence. He promised to try to get men to go with me and showed on the map the approximate route to the Coppermine and also from the river to Bear Lake where he says a chain of three lakes are passed through. He spoke of the lateness of the season and the difficulty of navigating Great Bear Lake in the fall and of the possibility of being stopped by ice. He said also that there are many portages on the route to the Coppermine but could not say how many. At the close of his talk he seemed to apologize for talking of so many difficulties. "But" he said "I must speak the truth owing to the fact that I was likely to be summoned to a conference at any time. I could not do any collecting of any account".

In the diary entry for July 30 (ibid) he notes that based on Bear Lake Chief's advice he cancelled his plans to travel to the Coppermine River, and instead, with Bear Lake Chief's assistance, turns to Great Bear Lake, accompanied by James McKinlay:

> Have given up going by the Coppermine altogether and am now trying to go by the Bell route[122] though at times that looks dubious. The Bear Lake Chief has done his best but his men do not pay much attention to his advice, and he is much distressed in consequence.

Bear Lake Chief arranged for him to hire a Tłı̨chǫ man named 'Coney' to guide and care for him on the trip to Great Bear Lake. Though not recorded in Preble's diary or published account of the expedition, based on an account by Bear Lake Chief's daughter, Helene Rabesca, it is clear that Bear Lake Chief and his family accompanied Preble on the trip as well. In an interview with Helene Rabesca, recorded by Nancy O. Lurie in August 1962, Mrs. Rabesca tells a story of a time when she, her father and her mother accompanied a white man who collected 'mouse skins'. Based on available data it is reasonably clear that

[122] The "Bell route" refers to *ʔı̨daàtı̨li*, or the Idaa trail, used and described by J. MacIntosh Bell (1901) in his geological explorations of Great Bear Lake.

Helene Rabesca was referring to Preble's 1903 expedition. Though Preble does not mention Bear Lake Chief following their initial meeting on July 30th, 1903, the HBC journal entry for Fort Norman corroborates this conclusion by noting that Preble, accompanied by James McKinlay, and Bear Lake Chief arrived on September 30th, 1903 (HBCA B.152/a/28 pg.4). Preble and Bear Lake Chief parted company at Fort Norman and never met again. The abridged story presents an interesting perspective on the scientific pursuits of a biologist as viewed by a young Tłı̨chǫ girl (Lurie, 1962, Tape Transcript in the author's possession; cf. Helm 2000: 347 – 354). My editorial comments are in brackets, Helm's in parentheses:

> The white man asked my father to go with him. When we were at old Fort there was my father and mother and me, three of us, and another man, four of us, and two white men. We were using the pointed canoe[123] and the white men had a modern canoe and we were on our way to Great Bear Lake. I don't exactly know what the white men were trying to do, but I think they were trying to measure the land. We were traveling over Marian Lake and we stopped at a place called *Xaılj,*[124] that's near that place and there they discussed about following the white men, where they were going. So they make up their mind and we went with them. I was too small so they didn't let me paddle. My mother used a birch canoe and my father used a birch canoe too. And those white men, they used a canoe of today like, they were three of them in one canoe. We were following those white men and we were much behind. There were many portages and my father worked hard but we were too slow and we can't follow them. We packed stuff on the portage, that's why we say they're working. We were travelling and passed lots of portages and we stopped at a place called *Deguzi* [location unknown]. It was a long time ago but I still remember. We were traveling then to a place named *Ɉts'èetì* [Hottah Lake], and there we stopped for a holy day. After we spent the holy day we traveled on the river called *intsinti* [Camsell River], and we went on to Bear Lake. When we got there we stopped at a place and my mother gave up paddling. It was hard and she said she quit. When my mother stopped paddling, the white men said that

[123] A reference to the Tłı̨chǫ kayak-form hunting/portaging canoe. See Andrews and Zoe (1998) for a description.

[124] A Tłı̨chǫ seasonal camp on the northern end of Marian Lake.

> they wanted to keep on. My mother said no. We had traveled with them all the way from old fort but that's the way the white men are, stubborn. To me these didn't look like other white men. These were the first white men I saw and other white men didn't look like them. We follow them and they said they were taking pictures and measuring the land. And he wasn't doing anything, only my father has to do things for him. He was collecting things of our land. He was collecting mice, fish, (and other things hard to make out from the tape). He put them in a 'suitcase' which was (two feet, gestured) high and it had five little floors (compartments). He put one object in a place and he collects lots of objects and put them in that case. He said that he was going to bring it to his land. When we stopped at the place for camping, the white man, all he does is collect things. When we spend the night, he just set traps for mice. And when we were on the portage and carry things, he just carries a gun and equipment for the gun. He just carries it across the portage and then he doesn't come back to get anything else. When we cross the portage my father has to do all the work, putting all those sacks in the canoe in one place. There we separate, and we went on our way, back to where we see all the people. We didn't see them for a long time in the bush, Indian people. We worked long with those white men and they made a leader of my father. They give him things and he gives them to the people, food and things.

From Mrs. Rabesca's account it is clear that Bear Lake Chief and family left Rae after Preble did, taking several days to catch up accounting, perhaps, for why there is no mention of Bear Lake Chief in Preble's journal.

Bear Lake Chief and the Doctor:

David Everett Wheeler was born 25 November 1872 in the city of New York to Everett Pepperell Wheeler, a lawyer (b. 1840 d.1925), and Lydia Lorraine Hodges (b.1842 d.1902). The only male of six children, Wheeler was raised in New York, attended Williams College and later, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, graduating and receiving his medical license in 1898. He married Mabel Blanche Whitney (b. May 16, 1865) in June 1898 and they had one son, Everett Pepperell Wheeler, named for his grandfather.

Little is known about Wheeler's early life, particularly how he became interested in hunting or wilderness travel, but it would be reasonable to assume that like many educated boys of his time, the popular and romantic writings of numerous European, American, and Canadian explorers and big game hunters who visited the Canadian north—Hearne, Mackenzie, Franklin, Richardson, Greeley, Schwatka, Lonsdale, Tyrrell, Pike, Russell, Whitney, Hanbury—had an effect on him. Wheeler made two trips to the Northwest Territories: First a shorter, unsuccessful musk-ox hunting trip of just over five months, arriving at Old Fort Rae on February 10, 1910 and leaving for Fort Resolution the following summer in July (HBCA B/172/a/5). During much of this period he travelled to the barrenlands with Germaine, the trading chief of the *Dechįlaa Got'įį* ('Edge of the Woods People'), one of the Tłįchǫ regional groups. Wheeler returned again in September, 1912 and stayed until September, 1913.[125] Wheeler's summer hunt in 1913 proved successful and he left with a large musk-ox skull leading A.W. Boland to note in the journal for Old Fort Rae, "Dr. Wheeler thinks he has the largest musk ox head shot by a sportsman, 29 ½" (HBCA B/172/a/5 f. 89).

When the First World War began in August, 1914, Wheeler was 41 years old, easily old enough to avoid active duty. Despite his age, Wheeler and his wife Mabel, who was then 49 years old, volunteered with the Red Cross in October 1914 and were posted to Paris (NARA 583830/A1534/M1490). On February 7, 1915, Wheeler enlisted with the French Foreign Legion and was sent to the front for active duty with the 3rd Marching Unit (Wheeler 1918). On September 28, 1915, while fighting in the Battle of Champagne, he was wounded in the right leg. Crawling to the rear, Wheeler stopped while under enemy fire and dressed the wounds of another Legionnaire, an action that earned him the *Croix de Guerre* (Wheeler 1918). Invalided because of his wounds, the Wheeler's returned to the United States in June 1916. Their stay in the US was brief, however, and both returned to England in February 1917, where David received a Captain's commission with either the Canadian or English Expeditionary Force and worked in the medical service in a British Military Hospital (NARA 583830/A1534/M1490).[126] Once the United States joined the war, Wheeler transferred to the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Division, American Expeditionary Force, with a rank of First Lieutenant, and was sent into active duty almost immediately. In September

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[125] Wheeler left on September 7, 1913 (HBCA B/172/a/5).

[126] This is noted on one of Wheeler's passport applications, though I can find no record of his service in either the Canadian or British war records available to me.

1917, Mabel travelled to Paris to volunteer with American Ambulance, Hospital of Paris, Military Hospital No.1, where she worked until July, 1918 when she returned to the United States (NARA 583830/A1534/M1490). David Wheeler was killed in action on 18 July 1918 while attending the wounded under enemy fire, a gallant action for which he was awarded a posthumous Silver Star.[127] He is buried in the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, Belleau, France.

Of the three Americans that came into direct contact with Bear Lake Chief, Wheeler spent the most time with him. Making two visits—an unsuccessful first trip in 1910, and again in 1912-13 when he was able to kill a musk-ox on a spring hunt—Wheeler spent more time in the Rae area (17 months) than Russell had (10 months) two decades earlier. Well educated and compassionate, Wheeler was a careful observer, recording his extensive commentary in a series of publications (Wheeler 1914a, 1914b, 1915; addendum to Mason 1914), which together provide an important ethnographic record of the pre-war years. Unlike Russell's at times disrespectful commentary on the local people, Wheeler deeply admired the Tłı̨chǫ, writing compassionately about their bush skills and sensibilities, their ability to eke out a "comfortable living" in such an unforgiving environment. In an addendum to a field report of John Alden Mason (1914), the first professional anthropologist to visit the region, Wheeler notes:

> They use very few tools and less social organization because they don't need them. Their knowledge of their country and its game and their muscular skill are so perfect that they can get a comfortable living, all they care for, without the aid of complicated paraphernalia.
>
> To my mind, the Dogrib canoe, sled and snowshoe are each perfect for the work for which they are designed and could not be altered in any way without being injured. Their whole culture seemed to me a perfectly symmetrical unit, every detail of which, including most of the taboos, was necessary in their environment. It gives them the maximum of possible comfort. It does not permit of a numerous population, but secures to this scanty numbers the greatest happiness obtainable. Every change in their culture has been a loss to them because it has disturbed the balance between themselves and their environment which was as nearly perfect as

[127] Please see http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/citation.php?citation=45081.

> anything can be. I have never seen any people, red or white, who were as successful in getting meat as the Dogribs, who could travel as rapidly in small waters by canoe or who could make as comfortable living places.

At the end of the summer, 1913, Mason was unable to find passage across Great Slave Lake and had to wait for Wheeler to return from his musk-ox hunt so that he would have an experienced paddling companion. They left Rae together in September, 1913 and missing the last steamer of the season at Fort Resolution, had to paddle together several hundred kilometres to the railhead at Athabasca Landing in Alberta, arriving 23 October 1913 (Mason 1946). Wheeler's experience clearly had an effect on the younger scholar during the trip as Mason's field report (1914) and published account (1946) [128] of his trip contain numerous sentences that begin with "Dr. Wheeler states…" or "Dr. Wheeler informs me…". Unfortunately, Mason never encountered Bear Lake Chief during his few months in Rae during the summer of 1913.

Wheeler, however, had numerous encounters with Bear Lake Chief, making at least two trips to his cabin on *Tłeètì* (Lac Ste. Croix) near *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa*. The first of these trips was in June, 1910 (Wheeler 1914a:60-61):

> On June 15, although the big lakes were still choked with ice, a brigade of canoes came in from the Bear Lake Chief's camp. When they returned I went with them. As is customary in hurried trips to and from the post, each canoe carried double—a man and a boy. It was wonderful to see the latter, though only little shavers, paddle all day without signs of fatigue. On the portages a boy carried a load too heavy for him to lift. A man had to place it on his head before he could start. Yet they were always ready for a romp with small fry of their own age when we stopped to visit at lodges by the wayside. And every day we kept the trail until midnight, when the sunset pink, flushing the northern horizon, gave an illusion of approaching darkness, and signal for a few hours of sleep.

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[128] At the request of Edward Sapir—then with the Division of Anthropology at the Geological Survey of Canada—John Alden Mason (1887 – 1967) travelled to Rae on an exploratory ethnographic expedition in the summer of 1913 with the intent of coming back the next year to spend a winter with the Tłı̨chǫ. Regrettably for northern anthropology, the First World War intervened and Mason had to cancel his return trip. Following the war, other interests and opportunities—his extensive career involved ethnography, archaeology, and linguistics—took him elsewhere and he never returned to the north (Mason 1946; John Alden Mason Papers, American Philosophical Society, MSS.B.M384.)

> The Bear Lake Chief's camp stood on the shore of Dog Lake (Tli Ti)[129], the next lake north of My Net Lake[130] There were thirteen lodges. Nearly all the Indians were engaged in building canoes. The [men] make the framework, shape the bark and peg the pieces together with wooden pegs. Birch trees are small in this region so that a canoe seventeen feet long is constructed of pieces only about two feet square. When the canoe is pegged together the [women] form a sewing bee, stitch the seams with watape[131] and pitch them with white spruce gum. The manufacture of canoes illustrates well the interdependence of the sexes amongst these Indians. Everything they make requires both a [man] and a [woman] for its completion. In the lodge each individual has certain definite duties, prescribed by a rigid custom, for which he or she is trained from infancy. ... When Sunday came round the chief held divine service. After prayers he kissed with great unction, pictures of the Pope, the Virgin Mary and Mr. Cunningham[132], the Scotch Presbyterian factor of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The second visit took place in December 1912, when having returned to the north for a second chance at killing a musk-ox during the spring hunt, Wheeler spent the winter at Rae ('Willow River'). The HBC records show that Bear Lake Chief's wife and several 'sleds' arrived at the post on 22 December 1912 for the Christmas trade and festivities, though Bear Lake Chief was not with them, an odd occurrence for such a significant event (HBCA B/172/a/5 f.76). On 27 December, the Rae journal records "Many Indians left. Also Mr Wheeler with Bear Lake Chief's son. He is gone to spend time with Bear Lake Chief" (HBCA B/172/a/5 f.76).

As the following passage indicates, Bear Lake Chief had injured himself and was unable to travel. The injury —an axe cut—was serious enough that Wheeler was summoned

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[129] Clearly a reference to *Tłeètì* (Lac Ste. Croix) near *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa.* Wheeler has confused the word for dog (*tłı̨*) for gizzard (*tłe)*.

[130] Wheeler has conflated two lakes: Semı̨tı̨ ('my net lake') is separated from *Tłeètì* by *Gamètı̨* (Gamè's lake'), a lake that he records on a map in the same report as *Gahmı̨tı̨* ('rabbit net lake').

[131] Spruce roots.

[132] Likely John Findlay Cunningham, the clerk-in-charge at Fort Resolution. The post at Rae was considered a meat-provisioning station and the clerk there would have reported to the clerk-in-charge of Fort Resolution (HBCA Search File: Cunningham, John Findlay).

to provide medical aid. However, always attentive to opportunities to go musk-ox hunting, Wheeler was also interested in word about the post that some of the Tłı̨chǫ were preparing to make a trip to a trading post at the Dease River Mission,[133] where Wheeler thought he might be able to engage Copper Inuit to lead him on a musk-ox hunt (Wheeler 1914b:654-55). Significantly, Wheeler also reveals that Bear Lake Chief believed Bear Lake Chief's accident was caused by a medicine fight with another trading chief, Jeremy, a topic discussed in detail later:

> I spoke to Cochia (Little Brother),[134] the Chief's eldest son about it. He was anxious to have me visit his camp and medicine an axe-cut on his father's foot, but was non-committal as to the Dease River expedition. Although he would give no definite promise, the trip with him to his father's camp seemed to offer the best possibilities of sport during the month of January. We started the day after Christmas. Little Brother asked me not to use any of my "white's grub" while traveling, because there were thirteen sleds in the brigade, and if once we started on the good food it would be all eaten before we reached the lodges. Apparently the other Dog-ribs were actuated by the same motive, for with real provisions on every toboggan we all shared with our dogs the rotten "hung fish" put up for their use the previous autumn.
>
> We found the Chief in high feather over the success of a great medicine war with his rival, Old Jeremy. First Old Jeremy made medicine, but it missed the Bear Lake Chief and killed his son's wife's cousin. This made the Bear Lake Chief very angry and he made medicine which, however, missed Jeremy and killed his squaw's brother's illegitimate daughter. After several misses

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[133] Likely a reference to a winter encampment near Fort Confidence on the Dease Arm of Great Bear Lake, maintained by Father Jean-Baptiste Rouvière and Father Guillaume Le Roux, Oblate priests who were trying to bring the Roman Catholic mission to the Copper Inuit of the Coppermine River area. The priests were murdered in late 1913 by Uluksuk and Sinnisiak, Copper Inuit hunters. Both were brought to trial in 1917, found guilty of the murder of Le Roux and sentenced to death by hanging. This was the first time Inuit had been found guilty of murder in a Canadian court. The sentence was commuted to life in prison and the two Inuit were jailed in Fort Resolution. They were released in 1922 after assisting the police to establish a new contingent on the Arctic coast at Tree River (Morrison 2000).

[134] A reference to Bear Lake Chief's son, *Gotsia*, also known as Toby Bearlake and Toby Kotchilea.

> Jeremy's medicine came very close and the Chief cut his foot with an axe and was laid up all winter. This gave him plenty of time to make very strong medicine and Old Jeremy caught pneumonia when he visited the houses at the post and died. Thus only one chief was left among the Bear Lake Indians.
>
> The Chief entertained me most cordially. Both he and his crony, Susa Bo, gave feasts in honor of my visit, but they would not consent to any of their young men going to Dease River at that time of year. So I bade them all farewell and returned to Rae.

Old Jeremy was the *E'taat'ǰǰ* trading chief for Hislop and Nagle. Unlike Bear Lake Chief, there is very little recorded either in the historical literature or in Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition about the *E'taat'ǰǰ*, though Wheeler gives us this description from 1910 (Wheeler 1914a:57):

> The day before Christmas Old Jeremy, head chief for the free traders, stalked into the Indian room dressed in a beaver skin hat and an old scarlet uniform jacket of which he was very proud. He said, "This year there are no caribou and I have very little fur. The marten live on the ridges and we must have caribou to hunt them. But the mink live by the water and we can catch them while we hunt fish. I have brought you one mink skin (this is the old man's annual joke. Every year he hides a great sack of valuable fur and says he has only one mink. He chuckles when he says it and expects his auditors to laugh with him). I don't call mink fur at all," he continued, "Only marten and foxes are fur but I hope you will give me a big gratuity". The trader answered, "I am very short of goods. In the fall I helped out your young men when they were short of meat. Now they must bring me all their peltry". Jeremy replied, "I have told my young men to bring you all their catch and not to expect much for it. But I am the biggest chief so I hope you will give me as much as usual". In the end the receipt of fur was about as great as if the store had been bursting with supplies.

Wheeler's visit to Bear Lake Chief's camp at Christmas in 1912 was the last meeting of the two men, though they just missed each other the following July when Wheeler left for a musk-ox hunt and Bear Lake Chief arrived at the HBC post in Rae a few days later (HBCA

B/172/a/5 f. 87, 88). Wheeler finally left the Northwest Territories on 7 September 1913 (HBCA B/172/a/5 f.89) after a successful musk-ox hunt and Bear Lake Chief died 6 days later on 13 September 1913 (Father Pochat-Cotilloux, pers. comm., 1998). He was just over 60 years of age and is buried on an island near his cabin on *Tłeètì* (Lac Ste. Croix) near *Kǫ̀mǫ̀laa* (see Figure 21).

Though Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition records many stories of medicine fights, it is rare that an outsider was witness to one, as Wheeler was (cf. Ridington 1968; Sharp 1986; Smith 1990; Helm 1994; Krech 1982, 1996) and that he was party to this sensitive information is testament to the high regard the Tłı̨chǫ held for him. According to Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition, though Bear Lake Chief was victorious in his medicine fight with Old Jeremy, it eventually killed him too, as this fragment from an interview with Philip Huskey indicates (Andrews, fieldnotes, 1998):

> My grandmother used to tell me stories about him. The last time *K'aàwidaà* was here [Old Fort Rae] he met with *Mǫnwhi*[135] and told him that he would be taking treaty. "I will not be coming back because paint has touched me. I won't be here as a result. Tell them about the land and the people. As long as the sun rises and sets, the people will be here. I won't be here when treaty happens." He died that winter.

Through the agency of his *ʔı̨k'ǫ̀ǫ̀*, Old Jeremy placed 'paint' on Bear Lake Chief or his clothing, providing the mechanism to injure Bear Lake Chief, which ultimately caused him to slip with the axe and cut his foot, leading to his death. J. Alden Mason (1914; 1946) made extensive notes about Dene medicine during his visit in 1913, based on interviews with Tinite, a Slavey medicine man, providing an informative picture of how *ʔı̨k'ǫ̀ǫ̀* was used to seek revenge during Bear Lake Chief's days. Mason (1914:61) notes that "personal enmity with the aid of magic power is the only cause of sickness and accident" and that to seek revenge…:

> [T]he services of a shaman are generally secured, though the magic may be performed personally. A little animal or some other small object is taken, palmed until it becomes invisible and then is thrown in the direction of the victim. It enters his body and sickens him and more medicine must be used

[135] The Tłı̨chǫ chief who signed Treaty 11 in 1921.

> to cure him. When a man is thus sickened, if he cannot determine the person responsible himself, he calls on someone with stronger medicine to cure him. Shamans can thus either sicken or cure. He communes with his 'medicine', lies on the patient and listens and thus determines the cause and the causer of the sickness. Sucking is then resorted to as the actual method of cure. The object which has been maliciously introduced is sucked out, palmed to natural size and thrown into a rock or back to the sender. If the spittle resulting is rubbed into the hair it will serve to increase the power of the shaman's 'medicine.' The patient pays the 'doctor' whatever he feels able for curing him and to get revenge in the supposed perpetrator.

Thus, it was through the medium of paint, a trade item, that one trading chief used as an object of this medicine to attack and, ultimately, kill Bear Lake Chief. Though Bear Lake Chief was a good man and leader, a man of great skill and knowledge with powerful *ʔɻk'ǫ̀*, he was not immune to malicious attack from others with powerful *ʔɻk'ǫ̀*. Having been a beloved trading chief since at least 1890, his death in 1913 must have been a grievous event, widely felt in the region. That it resulted from a medicine fight, which killed two trading chiefs as well as members of both men's families, must have been cause for great concern.

Aftermath:

The cause of the medicine fight between Bear Lake Chief and Old Jeremy is unknown, though the highly charged economy of the fur trade of the day was likely a contributing factor. That Bear Lake Chief appears to have attempted to favour trade with Hislop and Nagle between 1897 and 1901 may have caused tension between the two trading chiefs. The trade in musk-ox robes brought incredible wealth to both the Tłı̨chǫ and the traders, never before seen in the north (Barr 1991). Hislop and Nagle arrived in Rae at the height of the musk-ox trade with an aim to "take control of the musk-ox trade" (Zinovitch 1992:115), stimulating intense competition between the trading companies. The impact on musk-ox populations soon meant that the hunters had to travel further and further each year to find success, bringing new pressures and risks. The competition between Hislop and Nagle and the HBC must have been partly realized through the actions of their allied trading chiefs, causing much tension between the two men, perhaps leading to the medicine fight.

Figure 21: Bear Lake Chief's grave and marker on an island in on *Tl̨eètì* (Lac Ste. Croix) (T.Andrews 1991/GNWT).

As Osgood (1933:33) has noted, the year following Bear Lake Chief's death, the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* stopped trading at Old Fort Rae, "the result of an epidemic sickness there" in 1914. However, in an interview recorded by Beryl Gillespie in 1971, Naidzo, a member of Bear Lake Chief's band, and a young man in 1914, explained that the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* stopped trading at Rae because the trader refused the customary gifts and feast before trading commenced (Helm 1994:46; endnote 4:160-61). This is a more likely reason and one corroborated by recorded events. With the outbreak of world war in the autumn of 1914 the Board of Trade of the British government suspended the fur auctions in London, causing the HBC to order its traders not to purchase furs during the winter of 1914-15 (Ray 1990: 98). Ray (1990:212) comments on the impact of this action on the relationship between the traders and the Aboriginal trappers:

> When the board instructed its men not to buy any furs during the 1914-15 season, it also ordered them not to extend any credit to the Indians. … [T]he Indians felt particularly betrayed by this action and resented the company

> for many years afterward. In later years Hudson's Bay Company traders referred to 1914 as the 'black year' of the fur trade largely for this reason.

Corroborating Ray's conclusions, Philip Godsell (1932:150-51), an employee of the HBC at the time, noted that:

> To this day the Indians have not forgiven the Company for what happened at the beginning of the war, and I think any experienced trader will agree that the Hudson's Bay Company never fully regained their old-time prestige with the Indians.

Following closely on the heels of the death of two prominent trading chiefs engaged in a deadly medicine fight, the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* were refused the long established custom of gift exchange and subsequent trade, and were refused an opportunity to acquire the supplies needed for the coming winter, a debt that would have been repaid with fur trapped during the following months. Without the advance of credit to acquire sugar, tea, tobacco, ammunition and other essentials, the risk of enduring hardship in the coming winter increased dramatically. As Ridington (1968: 1153) has noted for the Dane-zaa, a related Athapaskan group in northern British Columbia, though the Dene value good health and security, they live under considerable pressure from ecological uncertainty. Though many have powerful *ɔı̨kʼǫǫ̀*, cultural rules prescribe against it being used maliciously. Use of one's own power in a respectful way helps ensure the security of both the person and the group, especially when everyone follows this practice. Security, then, depends on the collective respect of *ɔı̨kʼǫǫ̀* and its power and when these practices are disrespected, dangerous things can happen. The combination of the recent deaths of their own leaders with being refused trade at the HBC in Rae—which was very likely seen as a result of the dangerous practice of the two chiefs—must have caused the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* to question their ability to provide for their continued security in the Rae area, leading them to retreat to a safer, known, less populated place, Great Bear Lake, where they became a contributing population to the Sahtuot'ine, the people of Délı̨ne. As Krech (1996:184-5) has noted "for Post managers, the segments of Natives' lives which lay beyond what the clerks considered of immediate or 'historical' importance constituted non-events" and, thus, it is likely that Boland was unaware of the medicine fight. In the end, Osgood was misled by A.W. Boland because he completely unaware of the complexities of why the *Sahtì Got'ı̨ı̨* left Rae. Why Boland chose

to invent an epidemic over the more obvious refusal of trade because of the war is a question that cannot be answered with available resources. Perhaps he had heard rumours about local deaths due to the medicine fight and assumed that they were due to disease. Alternatively, as the trader in charge of Rae in 1914, perhaps he somehow felt personally responsible for the outcome of the HBC decision to refuse trade and its impact on the *Sahtì Got'ıj*?

Regardless, the impact of world events had a permanent impact on the *Sahtì Got'ıj*. Bear Lake Chief lived during a time of escalating change for the Tłıchǫ, though more was to come. Fur trading resumed in 1915 despite the war. In 1917, the Canadian government moved to protect the decreasing number of musk-ox by passing legislation making it illegal to trade in robes. The act was amended in 1924 to prohibit musk-ox hunting altogether, and as a further measure to protect dwindling musk-ox populations, the Canadian government created the Thelon Game Sanctuary in 1927 (Barr 1991; McKinnon 1983; Ray 1990). The heyday of musk-ox hunting came to an end and with it the fabulous wealth and tense times of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In many respects the period ends with the death of Bear Lake Chief, and it is probably best that he didn't live to witness the impacts of the world economy, infringing more and more on Tłıchǫ life in the succeeding decades.

In 1899, the Canadian government negotiated Treaty 8 with the Dene and Cree bands south of Great Slave Lake, and though it is unlikely that he attended the talks, the impact of the treaty was not lost to Bear Lake Chief, as he later counseled the young Mǫwhi, to not sign future treaties (Philip Huskey, pers.comm., 1968). Despite this, in 1921, following discovery of oil at Norman Wells, the Canadian government found impetus for signing Treaty 11 with the Tłıchǫ and other Dene in the area north of Great Slave Lake. With the ending of the First World War, combined with a sharp rise in fur prices, the north witnessed an influx of white trappers. More change followed the Second World War, and the last decades of the 20th century brought even more, though during these years the Tłıchǫ began reclaiming control over their lives through land claim and self-government agreements.

Today, the gift of Bear Lake Chief's stories survive in Tłıchǫ oral tradition and his name graces a community centre in Gamètì, the main community of the *E'taat'ıj*. Born before the church held sway, living much of his life between the two treaties, Bear Lake Chief survives in oral tradition and historical records because of the quality of his leadership at a significant time. Despite significant and accelerated change in all aspects of northern life—politics, economy, religion, ecology—through strength of character and strong leadership, Bear Lake Chief managed to uphold Tłıchǫ values and culture in tumultuous

times. They remain strong today. Though only a local leader, the impact of his actions had much broader influence, reaching out nationally and internationally. Clearly a man of great intelligence and honour, his expertise was sought by all international visitors to the area and he was respected by the traders, his fair dealings with them are reflected in the commentary they have left in their journals and ledgers.

In some ways his influence continues today. In April of 1997 a small group representing the Tłı̨chǫ and the people of the Northwest Territories travelled to Iowa City to participate in a ceremony to return Bear Lake Chief's century-old caribou-skin conical lodge to northern Canada. Bear Lake Chief's lodge returned to much fanfare and elders and other Dene came from six communities to see Bear Lake Chief's lodge in an exhibit at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. In total, over 1500 people attended, marking the exhibit opening as the largest event ever hosted at the museum. Participating in both the trip to Iowa and in designing the exhibit was Elizabeth Mackenzie, a grand-niece of Bear Lake Chief, a granddaughter of his sister, Cornelie. So began another chapter in the story of Bear Lake Chief, carried on by his ancestors.[136]

[136] Chapter 6 explore aspects of the lodge's story.

Chapter 5) Bone into Stone: Cultural Revitalization and Indigenous Archaeology in the Northwest Territories, Canada.[137]

Introduction

Franz Boas (1907: 929-30) declared that a museum's primary role should be to preserve specimens from 'vanishing cultures' for the purposes of 'furnishing healthy entertainment,' instruction, and research.[138] Though this idea underpinned the development of museums from Victorian times well into the Twentieth century, during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, a variety of social, political and cultural shifts caused museums to take dramatic steps to 'decolonize' how they collect, preserve, present, and provide access to their collections (Ames 1992; Clifford 1997, 2004; Edwards et al 2006; Smith 2005). In North America, driven partly by the passage of the *Native Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) in the United States, and by a variety of Aboriginal land claim settlements in Alaska and northern Canada, museums have sometimes struggled to develop collaborative practices for working with Northern Aboriginal peoples when dealing with issues of collecting and presentation. One area in particular that has received much attention over the last decade has been the repatriation of ethnographic objects and grave remains.

In the Northwest Territories land claim settlements with the Gwich'in, the Sahtu Dene, and most recently, the Tłįchǫ, have all addressed the issue of repatriation, directing government and claimant organizations to 'make best efforts' and 'work together' to repatriate, to the Northwest Territories, ethnographic objects and ethnohistorical archival records. However, by focusing primarily on 'physical repatriation' the claims have created expectations that are, for the most part, yet to be realized. Unlike other regions of North America, the 'colonial present' in the Indigenous north occurred much later,[139] and museum

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[137] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at "The Ethnohistory and Archaeology of Northern Eurasia: Theory, Methods, and Practice," conference in Irkutsk, Siberia, 19 – 25 May 2007 and the abstract was published in the conference proceedings (Andrews 2007).

[138] Boas (1907:921) placed great importance on 'the value of the museum as a resort for popular entertainment … providing healthy and stimulating surroundings," to counteract "the influence of the saloon and race-track."

[139] First direct contact in the Mackenzie region occurred in 1786 with the establishment of a trading post at Moose-Deer Island near the current settlement of Fort Resolution. The oldest museum collections from the region, therefore, date from the early 1800s though the bulk of the 'early' NWT Athapaskan material in museums date from the mid- to late-1800s, or later.

collections were acquired mostly through ethical and legal means. Consequently, there is little that compels museums that hold these objects to de-accession them as they are held in lawful ownership.[140] Recognizing that museums have provided an essential and important service by protecting ethnographic objects, some Aboriginal groups have sought other methods of interacting with museum collections, engaging in a long process to decolonize the way museums and Aboriginal peoples interacted for generations. Indeed, the recent Tłı̨chǫ land claim and self-government agreement makes a subtle but important modification to the trend in NWT land claims by noting that repatriation may also include the temporary return of objects, providing opportunity to explore different forms of 'repatriation'.

Far from being a 'vanishing culture,' it is not surprising that the Tłı̨chǫ would approach the issue of repatriation in such a sophisticated manner as they have worked collaboratively with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC) for nearly two decades on several projects involving archaeological research, museum exhibits, object repatriation, and cultural revitalization projects. In 2006, as a direct endorsement of this aspect of their land claim, the Tłı̨chǫ recently partnered with the PWNHC, National Museums Scotland, and the University of Dundee to showcase a selection of Tłı̨chǫ and other Dene objects from the National Museums Scotland Athapaskan collection in exhibitions which toured Yellowknife, Ottawa, and Edinburgh. The concept of cultural revitalization underpinned the development of the exhibit and the organizers hoped that by bringing these objects back to the Northwest Territories, if only temporarily, they would stimulate local artisans in recreating objects represented in the exhibit (Andrews 2006; Daitch and Andrews 2007).

First described by Ann Fienup-Riordan (1996), the concept of cultural revitalization is an effort "not to reclaim museum objects but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied" (Fienup-Riordan 2005: xxvii). Though Fienup-Riordan used the term 'visual repatriation,' it has commonly been referred to as 'knowledge repatriation' in recent

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[140] The debate surrounding the politics of physical repatriation has received much attention in the scholarly literature over the last two decades and will not be addressed in detail here. For an overview of some of the major issues, and their relationship to museums, anthropology, and archaeology see Clifford (1997), Loring (2001), Strong (2005), and Watkins (2005). For a Canadian perspective on museums and repatriation see Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association (2004), Bell and Patterson (1999), Jacknis (1996), Janes (2009) and Wilson et al (1992).

literature, using a term coined by Igor Krupnik (Krupnik *et al*. 2002).[141] Most recently, especially in the Northwest Territories, the same concept has been expressed by the term 'cultural revitalization' (see Chapter 6) and, therefore, will be the term used here. Based on numerous experiences in Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, cultural revitalization projects involve Aboriginal elders and artisans travelling to museums to study objects to recapture lost techniques of manufacture and experience that the objects embody. Cultural revitalization projects provide profound benefits for the Aboriginal communities participating as they frequently find tremendous pride in the knowledge that other cultures have valued their ancestors' objects and carefully preserved them, sometimes for centuries, often leading to expressions of gratitude for both the collectors and museums (Fienup-Riordan 2005: xxvii). Cultural revitalization projects provide profound benefits for museums as well for having knowledgeable elders and artisans examining their collections can provide vast sources of information pertinent to the objects' history, manufacture, use and cultural context and setting. In this way, differing perspectives on the ontology of objects can bring depth and interest to object biographies.

Working with Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Shúhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene), Sahtuot'ine, Tłįchǫ and other groups in the Northwest Territories, the PWNHC has developed an extensive list of collaborative, cultural revitalization projects over its 30-year history. In addition to major projects in repatriation, cultural revitalization, and exhibit development, the PWNHC has also participated in collaborative projects in Indigenous archaeology (Nicholas and Andrews 1997). Rarely discussed in recent literature, Indigenous archaeology can also provide opportunities for cultural revitalization as elders, youth and artisans participate in archaeological studies. Discoveries in the field can have significant impact on oral tradition by inspiring cultural revitalization projects and leading to lost knowledge being 'repatriated' (Andrews and Zoe 1998).

This chapter will reflect on the experience of the PWNHC and its Aboriginal partners with respect to cultural revitalization projects with emphasis on a series of related projects

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[141] The concept includes a number of variations. For example, the term can also refer to the repatriation of knowledge embodied in photographs, film, documents and other materials found in archival records (e.g. Payne 2006). Kramer (2004:172-3) has used the phrase 'figurative repatriation' which she defines as the "…idea that First Nations artists can regain control of their material cultural objects by locating political artworks in western spaces as metaphorical acts of self-definition. In this way, contemporary First Nations artists make possessive claims for native cultural objects existing in museum collections by embracing them within newly created contemporary artworks." Neither of these variations will be discussed in any detail here.

flowing from a collaborative Indigenous archaeology project to inventory cultural resources along two traditional Tłı̨chǫ trails, the *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè* trails. One site in particular, a lithic quarry and sacred site, led to changes in Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition about the use of bone and stone tools. The discussion will examine the tensions when different knowledge systems interact through collaborative projects, and how this can lead to the (re)production of knowledge.

Change, knowledge, repatriation, and the Northern Heritage Centre

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre,[142] opened in 1979 by the Government of the Northwest Territories to house its growing collection of ethnographic objects and archival records and to administer a variety of government-directed heritage programs, has developed a long history of collaborative projects with local communities. Based in Yellowknife, itself located within Dene territory, proximity to northern indigenous societies has provided tremendous opportunity for a small, government museum to develop long-term collaborative partnerships with several indigenous communities.

Strong relationships evolve over long periods of time. In the early days of the Museum of the North, cultural revitalization projects were not possible as, like in most museums of the 1970s, access to collections, dictated by the practice of the day, was restricted to a museum 'professional' elite and budgets for funding such ambitious programs were well beyond the museum's grasp. Public access was restricted to the 'viewing' gallery where objects in glass cases were prevented from being touched. Little had changed, in this regard, since Boas (1907) argued that a museum's primary purpose was to preserve objects from vanishing cultures. With broad social and political changes in the late 1970s and 80s, museums began to change, and so did the PWNHC, beginning a process that continues today.

Change was occurring rapidly in Aboriginal communities, too, and beginning in the 1950s people began to move into to 'town' in order to have their children attend the new federal day schools and to take advantage of federal child benefit payments. As an early

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[142] Formerly called the "Museum of the North," this smaller and more modest institution struggled on shoestring budgets in temporary housing until Stuart Hodgson, Commissioner of the NWT, secured funding to construct a new territorial museum. The PWNHC opened officially on April 3, 1979 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by HRH Prince of Wales. Hodgson retired three days later leaving the construction and opening of the PWNHC as the crowning achievement to a long career as head of government in the NWT.

expression of the Canadian government's "Indian administration," parents were inelligible for the federal transfer payments until they had registered there children in schools, effectively replacing a traditional pedagogy of experiential learning on the land with a Western educational approach and pedagogy (Dyck 1991). By the 1970s youth began finding that a more sedentary life in communities was preferable to the more arduous 'bush' life and, as a result, knowledge of 'bush' skills began to slowly recede to be replaced with knowledge needed to interact with the increasing number of outside influences that were creeping, relentlessly, into the north. This change, however, brought concern that old ways were being lost and throughout the 1970s and 80s northern communities made many attempts to preserve skills and knowledge through a variety of heritage projects designed to record material culture, practice, and narrative. Thus, it is not surprising that during this period of great change, as the youth of the day later ascended to positions of authority within their communities, the birth of land claim organizations occurred.[143]

The PWNHC supported many of these local heritage projects[144] by providing funding or by purchasing objects. For example, the PWNHC (or its institutional predecessor, the Museum of the North) purchased birchbark canoes in 1972 and 1973, and a spruce bark canoe in 1983, all of which were produced through community-initiated heritage education projects.[145] Between 1978 and 1987 it supported the Rae Heritage Project, a local economic development effort to have local artisans produce objects of traditional manufacture. In addition to providing some financial support,[146] the PWNHC purchased over 115 objects produced by the project, including two model caribou skin lodge coverings (in 1979 and 1987).

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[143] For example, the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories (now the 'Dene Nation') began in 1969.

[144] When the PWNHC opened in 1979 the geopolitical boundary of the NWT included all of the communities now located in Nunavut, a separate territory since 1999. Numerous projects were conducted with these Inuit communities as well though, due to space limitations, they will not be inventoried or discussed here.

[145] Edward Jumbo, of Trout Lake, constructed a Slavey birchbark canoe for the museum in 1972 at the personal request of Stuart Hodgson. Another birchbark canoe, part of the Rae Heritage Project, was constructed by Tłı̨chǫ Chief Jimmy Bruneau in 1973. Johnny Klondike made a spruce bark canoe during a community heritage education project in Fort Liard. The Fort Liard Dene Band produced a 24 minute betacam video of the project which they distributed until the mid-1980s. These three canoes were displayed together at the museum through the 1980s and 90s and were not removed until building renovations began in 2005.

[146] The majority of the project funding came from a federal Canada Works grant.

In 1981, the PWNHC partnered with the Tulita Dene Band (then the Fort Norman Dene Band), and Raymond Yakeleya, an Aboriginal filmmaker with support from the National Film Board of Canada, and began a very ambitious heritage project. Working with historical photographs, local knowledge, and Shúhtagot'ine elders, the project constructed a traditional Shúhtagot'ine mooseskin boat at a traditional boat-making location on the Keele

Figure 22: A mooseskin boat being built on the Keele River, 1964.

(N. Simmons, NWT Archives 2007-002-042)

River in the Mackenzie Mountains (see Figure 22). The boat, over 40 feet in length, was made with a spruce pole frame covered with untanned moose skins. Following the successful launch of the boat and an arduous journey down the Keele to the Mackenzie River and the nearby community of Fort Norman (now Tulita), the boat was barged to the PWNHC, where it has been on display ever since. An anthropologist, the late Beryl Gillespie, accompanied the boat builders and recorded the event on behalf of the PWNHC and Gillespie's fieldnotes and photographs are now deposited with the Northwest Territories Archives. The National Film Board of Canada released a 28-minute documentary of the project in 1982 (Yakeleya 1982). For the museum and community alike, the mooseskin boat effort, which might be regarded as the first cultural revitalization project for the PWNHC,

was a remarkable and successful collaboration resulting in the construction of an important cultural object that continues to attract significant attention today.

Following the success of the mooseskin boat project, the museum opened its doors in 1986 to local artisans, inviting Dettah elder, Joe Martin, to construct a canvas covered 'rat' canoe, used for hunting muskrat and beaver in spring, in the museum lobby as a 'living history' display. Presented to the public during the museum's annual 'open house' events, where the public was permitted to visit the 'back rooms,' Mr. Martin's canoe-making display was a tacit recognition of the museum's growing partnership with local Aboriginal communities. Over the next two decades the museum continued to explore these relationships in a variety of projects continuing in a series of successful cultural revitalization projects in the 1990s and early 2000s. A complete survey of all projects is beyond the scope of this chapter but four examples are summarized below. A fifth example, the caribou-skin lodge project is discussed in the next chapter.

Tłı̨chǫ Birchbark Canoe Project

During a multi-year archaeological and cultural resource inventory of two traditional birchbark canoe trails, the *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè* trails, conducted in partnership with the Tłı̨chǫ Nation, the remains of 35 birchbark canoes were recorded. Though oral tradition and archival records had long documented how important birchbark canoes were for traversing the Tłı̨chǫ landscape the physical evidence renewed interest in them and the birchbark canoe project was initiated in 1996 as a response. After studying a canoe made in the 1970s by Chief Jimmy Bruneau held in the PWNHC collection, six Tłı̨chǫ elders began a 2-week project to construct a canoe. The traditional spring canoe-making time overlapped with the school year allowing direct participation of students at the canoe-making place, located in the bush near the community of Behchokǫ̀. The site was chosen carefully for its proximity to both birch trees but also because it was road-accessible allowing students from nearby schools to visit on a regular basis (see Figure 23). As the elders were all in their 80s, a skilled canoe maker from southern Canada was hired to assist with the more physical aspects of the project and a film crew was also contracted to document the project in VHS video. The completed canoe was installed in the high school in Edzo, over 25 hours of archival video recording were deposited in the NWT Archives, and a 30-minute documentary, in Tłı̨chǫ with

English subtitles, was prepared for use in the schools and for broadcast on the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN) (Andrews and Zoe 1997; Woolf and Andrews 1997). The

Figure 23: Tłįchǫ elder Joe Suzi Mackenzie guiding young novices in making a canoe. (T. Andrews, 1996)

project stimulated two other elders to make canoe, both now in schools, and another began making models destined for the souvenir market.

Inuvialuit Skin Clothing Project

The Inuvialuit Skin Clothing Project[147] began in 2002 with a study tour by Inuvialuit seamstresses, museum curators and anthropologists to Washington, DC to examine traditional Inuvialuit skin clothing in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution. A woman's outer parka (*qusunngaq*), a man's outer parka with pants (*kamiks*), a pair of mitts (*aitqan),* gloves (*aitqatik*) and boots (*kamik*) were selected for replication from a collection acquired at Fort Anderson, a short-lived fur trade post which was established in Inuvialuit territory in the mid-1860s. With the assistance of the Smithsonian Institution detailed patterns were made, the garments were photographed and other information was

[147] I am grateful to Charles Arnold who provided descriptions of the Inuvialuit Skin Clothing and Kayak projects.

documented. Materials needed for replicating the garments were collected later that year, and in 2003 replicas were made in Tuktoyaktuk. The finished garments (see Figure 24) were displayed at a community festival in Tuktoyaktuk, and at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) as part of their exhibition, *'Across Time and Tundra'.* Project participants remarked on increased Inuvialuit knowledge and pride in this aspect of their heritage, and several of the seamstresses drew inspiration from this project to initiate an ongoing program in Tuktoyaktuk to teach sewing skills to young mothers in the community.

Figure 24: Inuvialuit clothing (L) and working with a crooked knife on a kayak frame. Both photographs courtesy of Charles Arnold.

Inuvialuit Kayak Project

In 2002 the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre co-sponsored a community-based project in Tuktoyaktuk to replicate the frame of an Inuvialuit kayak in the collections of the CMC. This project built upon and extended skills developed by Inuvialuit who participated in a similar project sponsored by the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre several years earlier (see Figure 24).

The CMC kayak was fully documented by an ethnologist, and a project team consisting of anthropologists and Inuvialuit crafts persons who studied the plans, photographs of kayaks, and archaeological remnants of kayaks in the collections of the PWNHC and at various sites in the vicinity of Tuktoyaktuk. The replication project was carried out in a workshop in Tuktoyaktuk situated close to the school in order to facilitate visits by school groups as well as other members of the community. The frame is now in the collections of the PWNHC, and as a direct result of this project another Inuvialuit kayak was

made in the summer of 2003 as a demonstration project to accompany an exhibit at the Glenbow museum in Calgary.

The Gwich'in Caribou Skin Clothing Project

In 2000, a team of Gwich'in seamstresses, a filmmaker and ethnologists from the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI), CMC, and PWNHC, travelled to Washington DC and Hull, Canada to study Gwich'in outfits in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution and Canadian Museum of Civilization (Kritsch and Wright-Fraser 2002). The team selected a Gwich'in man's multi-piece summer outfit dating from the late nineteenth century from the

Figure 25: The project management team and models wearing the new Gwich'in outfits. (T. Andrews, 2003)

CMC collection and proceeded to make five replicas: one for each of the four Gwich'in communities, and one for the permanent collection of the PWNHC. The outfits are fashioned from white tanned caribou skins and decorated with dyed porcupine quills and silverberry seeds. Beginning in the winter of 2000, forty-two seamstresses from the four Gwich'in communities and Yellowknife worked on the replicas at home, during group workshops, and as part of a science camp for Gwich'in youth. Two and half years later, on

March 28, 2003, the completed outfits were unveiled in a public celebratory event at the PWNHC (Thompson and Kritsch 2005; see Figure 25). Four of the replicated outfits are now displayed in prominent locations in each of the Gwich'in communities, and a major exhibition celebrating the project opened at the PWNHC in early 2007.

Indigenous Archaeology at the Northern Heritage Centre

In addition to its dual role as museum and archives, the PWNHC also houses several government heritage programs, including official geographic names, historic site commemoration, community heritage outreach, arts, and archaeology. Archaeological research has provided an opportunity to explore partnerships with Aboriginal communities and, following the lead of its founding director, archaeologist Robert Janes, archaeologists at the PWNHC have conducted numerous collaborative projects with community groups beginning in the early 1980s and continuing to today (see Andrews and Zoe 1997; Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998; Arnold 1988; Arnold and Hanks 1991; Hanks and Pokotylo 1989; Hanks and Winter 1983, 1986, 1991; Hart 1994; Janes 1983, 1989, 1991; Pokotylo and Hanks 1989). Indeed, collaborative, or Indigenous archaeology[148] has been adopted as the model for all archaeological research undertaken by the museum (Andrews et al 1997).

In developing project research designs collaboratively with local communities PWNHC archaeologists frequently found that community ideas of archaeology did not always match their own. Aboriginal communities regard archaeological projects as a way to provide educational opportunities for their youth, a way of recording more recent land use sites, perhaps in conjunction with another purpose such as preparing for land claim negotiations or managing impact of major developments on traditional lands by establishing protected areas. Frequently, communities combine archaeological research with these multifaceted projects and together they provide an experiential framework for having elders and youth interact while participating in field research settings. Elders teach the youth bush skills or traditional oral narratives associated with these places, while archaeologists instruct them in the techniques and methods of their discipline. Importantly, the archaeologists and elders become students in these sessions as well, learning from each other. Having to deal with managing the increasing pressures of non-renewable resource development and its impact on archaeological sites, archaeologists are often primarily concerned with

[148] Indigenous archaeology has been tentatively defined as "archaeology done with, for, and by Indigenous peoples" (Nicholas and Andrews 1997:3).

undertaking projects designed to establish a baseline of data to support heritage resource impact assessments. As these goals sometimes dovetail with community objectives, synergies of effort can lead to improved relations, sharing of knowledge, as well as achieving the goals important to each knowledge tradition. Due to the success of this approach, it has become part of our regular practice to develop more generalized 'heritage' projects that allow sufficient range to achieve both the goals of communities and archaeologists and, indeed, one that we recommend to all archaeologists working in the Northwest Territories (Andrews et al 1997). For the remainder of this chapter I will focus on the PWNHC's experience with a group of related heritage projects undertaken with the Tłı̨chǫ Nation.

ʔı̨daàtı̨li and *Hozìideè* Trail Cultural Resource Inventory Projects

Beginning in the winter of 1990-91 we began a series of related cultural resource inventory projects focused on two Tłı̨chǫ trails.[149] From 1990 to 1993 we focused a cultural resource inventory on *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* which joins Great Slave and Great Bear lakes and, as a main artery, provides access to a vast traditional land use area. During the summer of 1994 we completed a cultural resource inventory of a tributary trail, *Hozìideè*, which was one of the main routes to the barrenlands. A research team, consisting of an archaeologist (the author), a co-researcher and interpreter, John B. Zoe, and an elder, the late Harry Simpson, worked together for the duration of both projects, to which other elders, youth, or archaeologists occasionally joined in for summer fieldwork, and other projects inspired by the inventory work. Working with elders during the winter months in their homes in the community of Gamètì the team recorded traditional place names and land use information pertinent to the trails which were then travelled by canoe during the summer months, visiting places identified by elders during the winter mapping sessions (see Figure 26). In this fashion, the projects recorded over 500 traditional place names, 482 archaeological sites, 189 graves, and 20 sacred sites (Andrews and Zoe 1997, 1998; Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998). Oral narratives were recorded on audiotape at many of the places visited creating an archive of a number of important stories.

These tangible resources—archaeological site and geographic name inventories, photographs, artifact collections, reports, and oral narrative archives—have subsequently been used by the Tłı̨chǫ to advise land selection strategies during the negotiation of their

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[149] Aspects of this research was described in Chapters 2 and 3.

land claim and to develop curricular materials for use in the school system (Zoe 2007). They have also been used to develop an interactive website summarizing incorporating aspects of several of the collaborative projects under the title "Lessons from the Land,"[150] which allows

Figure 26: Portaging around a set of rapids on the trail, 1992. (T. Andrews)

students to take a virtual tour of several sites along *ʔįdaàtįli*. The website has been adopted as the home website for all computers in the Tłįchǫ high school in Edzo.

However, a number of intangible products or effects can be noted as well. In 1994 we asked the executive director of the local school board to join us on a short three-week[151] canoe-based field season where we revisited a few locations, including two important sacred sites, to re-evaluate earlier work based on new knowledge revealed through additional oral testimony from elders. For the research team (Andrews, Zoe, and Simpson) our goal in inviting the school board representative was simple: We recognized that the method of travelling trails by canoe was a prime way of bringing youth and elders together in a learning environment, providing opportunity for elders to instruct youth in the ways of the land. We had learned so much during the earlier field trips—learning linked directly to the process of

[150] http://www.lessonsfromtheland.ca/

[151] In previous years these canoe journeys lasted 6 to 8 weeks.

travel and experience—that it revealed to us a method of recapturing knowledge through the experience of travel. Harry Simpson had frequently used the simile that the 'land is like a book'[152] to explain that while each place was a repository of stories, it required the experience of travel to 'turn the pages'.

Our effort was successful and the next year the Tłı̨chǫ school system acquired a small number of 22' canoes, and teams of six youth and elder paddlers travelled the traditional trail from Rae to Gamètì. So successful was this first trip that the program expanded significantly over the succeeding years and now each of the four Tłı̨chǫ communities have their own fleet of canoes. Each summer up to 75 elders and youth travel together on one of many traditional canoe trails timed so that when they arrive at the destination community, they are able to join in the annual 'assembly' where aspects of culture, governance, and economy are debated. Indeed, the school board has developed a course called "Trails of Our Ancestors" permitting youth participants to obtain credits towards completing their high school education (Dogrib Divisional Board of Education 1996; see the brief discussion of this effort in Chapter 3).

Changing Bone into Stone and Quarrying Knowledge in the Process

Previous to our collaborative research, Tłı̨chǫ elders consistently recounted that in the times before metal tools were available through trade with Euro-Canadians, the Tłı̨chǫ used only bone for points on arrows, darts, and thrusting spears, for knives and scrapers. Though this reflects, partly, a tradition widespread throughout all Northern Athapaskan cultures of using barbed antler points on thrusting spears used for hunting caribou and on leisters for fishing, and leg bones from caribou and moose for two styles of hide scrapers, it clearly countered archaeological evidence from these same regions which demonstrated that stone tools were at least as common as bone ones (cf. LeBlanc 2009). Moreover, it also ignored that many older women still use and curate stone hide scrapers and that the Tłı̨chǫ word for scraper is *kwetè* ('stone scraper').

Thus, as we recorded a growing number of archaeological sites with only stone tool remains,[153] the elders began to question their long-held ideas about bone-only technology.

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[152] See Andrews 2004:319 for a discussion of Harry's simile, 'the land is like a book.'

[153] Subarctic archaeological sites, especially those located in the boreal forest, have very acidic soils leading to poor preservation of organic objects. Consequently, many subarctic archaeologists have very little experience working with a 'complete' technology, as bone and wooden objects are lost to rapid decay and might lead to under representing the importance of organic substances in

At one site in particular, called *Kwedoò*, or 'blood rock,' it became apparent that stone tools not only formed a significant part of the pre-contact tool assemblage, the raw material was associated with a sacred site suggesting that it had at one time been associated with important spiritual practices.

Kwedoò is a Tłįchǫ sacred site said to be the birthplace of the culture-hero, *Yamǫǫ̀zha*, renowned for transforming a dangerous 'old' world in which humans and animals could change form into the 'new' world of today. Paraphrased from stories told by Harry Simpson and Jean Wetrade (elders who lived in Gamètì, both now deceased) the story of *Kwedoò* is presented here in an abridged form:

> Long ago an old man was camped near *Kwedoò*. Late one evening he heard a squeaking noise in the camp and began to search for the source. Turning over rocks and sticks in his search he finally turned over a log and found two boys, the size of spiders. Being alone he adopted the small boys and raised them as his sons. The two boys, Yamǫǫ̀zha and his brother Gahmǫǫ̀zha, called the old man 'grandfather' and worked with him as they grew. Once, when in their teens, Gahmǫǫ̀zha convinced Yamǫǫ̀zha that they should play a trick on their grandfather. Because the old man was always complaining of the cold, while the old man was sleeping they cut off the top of his head and threw hot rocks into his head. This killed the old man and he turned to stone creating the large bedrock hill known today as *Kwedoò*.

In July of 1991, as part of our first season of fieldwork on *ʔįdaàtı̨li*, we visited *Kwedoò*. As described in Chapter 3, at the summit of this 210 metre hill, in the midst of the lichen-covered bedrock, is a particularly large crack about 10 feet in length and 8 inches across at its widest point, filled with melt or rain water. Beside it is a smooth patch of bare bedrock cleared of all lichens. With Harry Simpson's guidance we were all directed to perform the geomantic ritual of throwing a pebble into the crack, listening for the sound of it falling down. After each taking a turn, we returned to the canoe, taking a different route down to water's edge. About half way down we were surprised and excited to discover a

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technological traditions. However, where subarctic archaeological remains have been preserved by permafrost, preservation of organic remains reveals a rich technological tradition where bone and wood play a significant role.

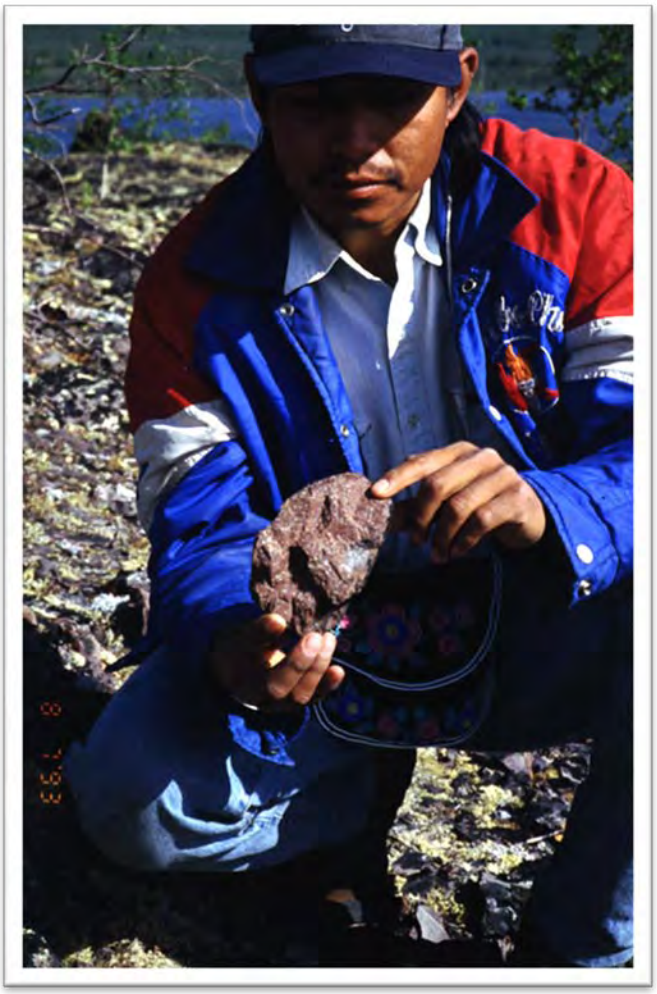

Figure 27: John B. Zoe with a biface from *Kwedoò*. (T. Andrews, 1991)

large lithic quarry. Extending over almost a hectare in area and consisting of a series of stone steps made of rhyolite, a mafic volcanic rock exhibiting fracture properties[154] ideal for making stone tools, the quarry was of a significant size. As at the top of the hill, the quarry was covered with lichen and was initially hard to see. However, on close inspection it appeared as if visitors to the quarry had removed large cores and flakes from the rise of the bedrock steps. These were further reduced on site creating a large area of debitage, which appeared to have accumulated to a depth of nearly a metre in some spots. The extent of deposit suggested that the quarry had been used for a lengthy period of time—generations as opposed to years—and asking Harry about it I was surprised to learn that he had no prior knowledge of the quarry's existence.

In reflecting on the discovery later that evening, Harry wondered if the name of the location—blood rock—did not reflect the violence related to the death of the old man as he had long thought but, instead, might it reflect the colour of the stone material found at the quarry (a reddish brown colour resembling dried blood; see Figure 27). If true, he postulated, then similarly named places might lead us to other quarries, and he listed three other locations named for some quality of stone. Over the next two years we had an opportunity to visit each of these locations and they all turned out to be large rhyolite or

[154] Called 'conchoidal fracture' in the science of fracture mechanics.

quartz quarries, demonstrating that only through the benefit of our interdisciplinary collaboration, were we able to recover some lost knowledge related to toolstone sources.

Discussion

In recent years, the Tłı̨chǫ have adopted a revised pedagogy that attempts to combine the best of two different worldviews—Western and Tłı̨chǫ —in order to ensure that Tłı̨chǫ youth have a strong education with to make their way in a rapidly changing world. A key component of it is an older and traditional Tłı̨chǫ pedagogy linked to mobility, or travel over a storied or cultural landscape (Andrews 2004; Andrews and Zoe 1997; Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998; Chapter 2 and 3), where prominent geographic features are used as mnemonic devices to recall the stories that provide information about history, identity, and lifeways. Trails link these named places and together with the stories residing in them create a complex topology of knowledge.

Thus, children were educated and socialized through travel as parents and elders helped them learn the names and narratives through storytelling. The daily practice of living—setting traps or a net, harnessing dogs or repairing snowmobiles, butchering a caribou, tracking a moose, cooking favourite foods, cutting and sewing hide clothing, framing a birchbark canoe, lashing a snowshoe, travelling safely over thinning spring ice or rough water—was taught by demonstration as youth watched experienced adults undertaking these activities. Viewed through the lens of personal experience, the storied landscape becomes a repository of information, ready to be called upon when required. Through the daily travel required to make a livelihood, and using the mnemonic cue of landmarks to recall the information stored in the landscape, individuals gradually acquired the knowledge needed to dwell in a changing world. Elders considered 'knowledgeable' were those that had travelled the most, often referred to in the Tłı̨chǫ vernacular as those who have 'worked' hardest on the land. Therefore, prestige and status were tied directly to travel and the acquisition of knowledge.

Today, the challenge for Tłı̨chǫ educators is to find ways of importing this ancient pedagogy into a colonial bricks-and-mortar school system imposed by the state. Recognizing this problem in the 1980s the Tłı̨chǫ leadership negotiated significant control over the right to control education in their communities and, in 1991, developed a new educational philosophy based on the simile "strong like two people" (Dogrib Divisional Board of Education 1991). Taking the words 'strong like two people' from a speech by traditional Chief Jimmy Bruneau, the educational philosophy developed around them recognizes that

Tłı̨chǫ youth will need a 'southern' education if they are to make their way in a modern world. Today most young Tłı̨chǫ seek high paying jobs in the wage labour sector and very few, if any, are continuing fulltime with traditional pursuits like trapping.[155] Being able to work safely at a diamond mine[156] requires a very different education than that for travelling safely over spring ice while out trapping. However, recognizing that Tłı̨chǫ identity and culture are tied to the land, school administrators are working hard to envelope the southern-style school system into Tłı̨chǫ culture. They do this through a variety of techniques which take the classroom out on the land (e.g. on-the-land camps, bringing elders and youth together in 'cultural revitalization' projects focusing on learning how to make examples of traditional material culture) or by bringing the landscape into the classroom (e.g. bringing elders and the Tłı̨chǫ language directly into the classroom, providing youth with the opportunity to participate in school extracurricular activities such as traditional drumming, developing curricular material based on Tłı̨chǫ culture and history). In this way, the Tłı̨chǫ have made the southern-school system part of their cultural landscape, using it to their advantage in a form appropriate to their own cultural norms. Similarly, our collaborative attempts to bring students out to camps where elders are making birchbark canoes and caribou skin lodges helps bring the southern classroom out into the landscape, while installing canoes and lodges in schools, or virtual canoe trails on computers in classrooms, attempts to bring the landscape inside, providing new ways for youth and elders to engage the Tłı̨chǫ cultural landscape.[157] This example of mulilocality and multivocality in landscape helps to empower a renewed Tłı̨chǫ concept of place (Rodman 1992). As Barbara Bender (2002) has noted, cultural landscapes are permanently under construction.

Julie Cruikshank has argued "local knowledge is never crudely encapsulated in closed traditions, but is produced during human encounters…" (2005: 4). She defines 'local knowledge' as "tacit knowledge embodied in life experiences and reproduced in everyday behaviour and speech" (2005:9). If knowledge is the product of human encounters gained through a lived experience then knowledge is acquired through action, practice, and the course of everyday life. If people from different epistemological traditions engage

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[155] Though hunting, fishing and trapping continue as significant pastimes for many, contributing significant amounts of wild meat to daily diets.

[156] Three diamond mines currently operate within the Tłı̨chǫ settlement area providing significant employment for Tłı̨chǫ youth. Another mine is in the process of environmental assessment.

[157] I am grateful to Glen MacKay for helping me draw out this point.

collaboratively in a practice, then it follows that knowledge from both traditions will be exchanged.

In 1985 and 1986, PWNHC archaeologist Christopher Hanks worked with Shúhtagot'ine elders at Drum Lake where they jointly ran a field school for youth from Mackenzie Valley communities. The program combined archaeological survey and excavation, experiments in making and using stone tools, and the teaching of bush skills and local legends, set amidst the grandeur of the Mackenzie Mountains. Reflecting on his collaboration with Chris Hanks, Chief Paul Wright notes that working closely with someone allows both to gain knowledge from each other:

> As we travelled on the land we looked around us and thought about how good our way of life was. That way we developed a real understanding and a respect for each other.
>
> This work [teaching students] can best be done by telling the students stories and doing archaeological work with them. If we tell them stories but they don't get practical experience it is impossible for them to truly understand what life is all about. By working together they not only gain experience they learn respect and cooperation. They learn and help each other and in this way we can go back and recapture knowledge of our past. If we do nothing then our history will certainly be lost.
>
> I am grateful for the work Chris is doing. If it were left up to me I wouldn't have a clue [about the archaeology] would I? We wouldn't know how our ancestors lived before the coming of the whiteman. Although I had heard the stories now I have seen with my own eyes the work that my forefathers have done. I have seen the kinds of work that they did and I have seen their actual campsites. At some places the earth is thick over them. Seeing that has really made me think, and I love it. Left to ourselves we would have the stories but they're only on part of our history. The rest is unclear. Through this archaeology I am seeing my ancestors lifestyle with my own eyes. It makes me think, "So this is how they really lived". This work has a story to tell and it is a good story.

> People are important to one another. You may not realize it at the time but when you work closely with another person you gain knowledge from one another. On the other hand, if you try to do things alone you make no progress. It has been this way ever since there was Man. That is why when a person works with you, if you take a long hard look you can perceive his wisdom. I think about this often. It is by speaking your Native language and by listening to the stories and legends that makes you start thinking. If someone is talking to you but you are not listening properly it takes a long time for you to capture the real meaning of what they are saying. In the past this was the way our elders spoke to us. The elders told us 'There is knowledge in this story, find it and keep it. The story itself will not keep you alive but the lesson will help you survive. If you do not listen properly you cannot learn the lesson. Your path to survival will be unclear'. That is what they told the people. They were so right!

From Paul Wright we understand that knowledge is the product of human encounter and experience, and therefore a process ever-changing and growing: Knowledge comes and goes. When people of different epistemological traditions encounter each other, often their interaction challenges their beliefs and faith in their own knowledge system. More often, however, the challenge within an epistemological tradition is greater as long-held faith in one's own knowledge superiority can be hard to dislodge. As Colin Scott has argued, Aboriginal traditional knowledge results "from intellectual processes not quantitatively different from those of Western science" (Scott 1996: 84) and, more and more, both traditions are seen as sciences. However, in order to facilitate effective collaboration between Aboriginal and Western sciences the challenge lies not between epistemological traditions but instead lies in challenging the "root metaphor" (Scott 1996:69) underlying each knowledge tradition. For Western science this means challenging the paradigm of "impersonal causal forces that opposes 'nature' to 'mind,' 'spirit' and 'culture'" (Scott 1996:69). For Aboriginal science it means challenging a root metaphor that sees knowledge passed intact from generation to generation, ignoring the influence of experience, and that some degree of change occurs over time. Both knowledge traditions share an elite vision of their tradition's primacy, and this too must be challenged if collaboration is to be more than a token action or political necessity. It might be argued that Western science has had a

harder time of challenging its metaphors than Aboriginal science has. Such is the way of tradition.

Cultural revitalization projects, whether museum-based or part of Indigenous archaeology projects out on the land, permit opportunities for humans from different epistemological traditions to collaborate on a common goal. In other words, they provide opportunities to learn through interdisciplinarity. In museums, these encounters take place in what Clifford (1997) has referred to as 'contact zones,' providing opportunities to challenge long-held beliefs. Objects embody knowledge and interacting with them, as Fienup-Riordan (2005) has noted allows one to repatriate the knowledge. Whether they are visited in a museum or are discovered in an archaeological excavation objects become agents in the production of knowledge. However, in a similar fashion, landscape and travel become agents in producing knowledge as well. This is especially true when these activities are incorporated into a sophisticated educational philosophy such as "strong like two people". In short, all activities are part of an individual's 'experience' and all experiences are part of the process of learning. As both Paul Wright and Harry Simpson have noted, though landscape features and other objects can be an agents in reproducing knowledge, it is only through human experience that knowledge is realized.

Chapter 6) Mobile Architecture, Improvisation, and Museum Practice: Revitalizing the Tłįchǫ Caribou Skin Lodge[158]

Introduction

In recent years, museums have become more attuned to community desires to interact with objects in their own ways (Fienup-Riordan 2005: xvii), providing opportunities for both indigenous people and museum staff to learn valuable lessons about their own practices. This chapter is focused on one such project, the revitalization of a Tłįchǫ Caribou Skin Lodge: The lessons learned from this project were crucial to the way that the skin lodge has now become embedded in Dene practice and has been given a new life. In order to set the scene, however, I would like first to provide another example of the way that museums are changing their practices. By facilitating community access to objects in ways that stretch the boundaries of museums—by taking objects out of their cases and back to the communities of origin—museums are redefining both their purpose and purpose of their collections.

In October 2006, an exhibit of Mackenzie Valley Athapaskan mid-nineteenth century objects borrowed from the National Musuems of Scotland (NMS) opened at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Begun as a collaborative effort between the Tłįchǫ Government, the University of Dundee, and museums in Yellowknife and Edinburgh, the exhibit entitled *De T'a Hoti Ts'eeda: We Live Securely from the Land* (Andrews 2006) had a primary objective of displaying a selection of objects chosen by Tłįchǫ elders. To facilitate this objective, museum staff, armed with photographs of objects from the NMS, travelled to the four Tłįchǫ communities to meet with elders. In the end, 50 objects were chosen based partly on the elders' input, but also respecting museum conservation practices, air cargo restrictions, and an attempt to select objects from all Mackenzie Valley Dene cultures represented in the larger collection, something that the Tłįchǫ elders felt was important.

Amongst the 50 objects eventually selected were examples of elaborate caribou skin clothing made by Gwich'in, Tłįchǫ and Slavey seamstresses, some decorated with dyed

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[158] An abridged version of this chapter has been accepted for Anderson DG, Wishart R, and Vaté V, editors, in preparation, About the Hearth: Perspectives on the Home, Hearth, and Households in the circumpolar North. Berghahn Books. Research for some of the material here was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in a Boreas Grant to G. Oetelaar, University of Calgary.

porcupine quills and silverberry seeds in intricate detail. There were spruce root baskets woven so tightly as to be waterproof allowing them to be used as cooking vessels. Other objects, deemed rare in Athapaskan museum collections, included a Slavey girl's puberty drinking tube made from a swan bone and a Slavey man's cap decorated with grizzly bear claws. Many were utilitarian or 'everyday' objects, such as moccasins, dog harnesses, and snowshoes. Some of the nineteenth century objects on display have modern counterparts that are virtually identical, save for minor details such as being sewn with waxed nylon instead of sinew or decorated with modern glass beads rather than quills and seeds. Other objects are no longer made and survive only in memory.

While the exhibit ran, I had numerous opportunities to speak with Dene elders who visited it. These visits often took on a repetitive pattern: After viewing objects in all the 30 or so cases, holding light conversation about the memories they elicited, elders would return to spend several minutes viewing and talking about one particular object: a fish net made from willow bast. Many would remark that as youth they remembered parents or grandparents making these nets, some noting that they participated in the making of nets, too. Many lamented that the nets are no longer being made, often remarking on the last date they had seen or heard of one. Several talked of the ways the nets needed to be handled and cared for, noting, for example, that they could never be allowed to dry out and that when moving camp, they needed to be stored in tightly closed skin bags tanned with the hair on which allowed them to stay wet until they could next be set in a lake. Others noted that fish had to be removed quickly from them in winter so they would not be left on the ice too long or they would break when being put back down the net hole. Should a net freeze to the ice, the individual who allowed it would be regarded as careless. But all remarked on the skill, knowledge, and experience needed to make them, noting that making a net was often a family activity, where adults and children all helped collect the bast, roll it into cord, and then help to weave and knot the net.

An important aspect of the exhibit saw a select number of objects being carefully packaged and transported back to the their community of origin, often a small, remote Tłı̨chǫ settlement, where they were used in educational programs in the local school. Elders, wearing white cotton gloves, would hold the objects to demonstrate particular uses or techniques of manufacture to school children ranging in age from 5 to 18 years. The sessions were always richly textured, allowing children, elders, and museum professionals to engage these objects with all of their senses, a rare experience. As well, the knowledge gained was invaluable, as the objects frequently served as mnemonic devices, triggering

memories for the elders that they were willing to share with all. For the Tłı̨chǫ elders, the sessions allowed them to repurpose museum collections to fit better with their own educational priorities. In working with numerous elders over my career, they have all shared a single objective when participating in a collaborative project: That youth be provided educational opportunities through direct participation whenever possible. By agreeing to permit objects collected more than a century ago return temporarily to Canada from Scotland for an exhibition in another museum, the National Museums of Scotland was making a significant gesture. To then let them be transported to remote settlements where they were used by Tłı̨chǫ elders in educational programs was an extraordinary gesture, one that permitted Dene values to take precedence, while providing unique opportunities for the objects to gain new purpose.

While museums tend to focus on collecting and managing objects measuring their heritage value often in terms of rarity, aesthetic quality, a sense of representativeness and other factors, for the elders these held less importance than the skills, knowledge and experience that the objects embodied. What can we learn from Dene values that might help us understand this contrasting appreciation of objects? What implications might this hold for museums operating in the 21st century, especially those with a mandate to serve a primarily Aboriginal audience?

A series of related projects focused on Tłı̨chǫ caribou skin lodges provides an opportunity to explore these questions. Designed to be light and mobile, the conical lodge was considered one of the most important of the few possessions a family owned. Recent collaborative cultural revitalization projects focused on conical lodges in museum collections, provided opportunities for the Tłı̨chǫ to teach youth about the history, design and manufacture, and social context of these durable, portable structures, while participating in a creative practice guided by tradition. In the process, important lessons about museum practice were learned as well.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is twofold: first, to briefly examine the ethnographic context of two collaborative repatriation projects involving Tłı̨chǫ caribou skin lodges and, secondly, to explore lessons learned from these projects in light of Dene value frameworks, the process of creativity and improvisation in relation to ideas of tradition, and how this might inform collecting practices of museums today.

Part I: Hearth, Home and Revitalizing Tłı̨chǫ Lodges

Since 1981, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre has collaborated with several northern Aboriginal groups on more than ten major cultural revitalization projects (see Chapter 5). Whether the projects focus on recreating traditional watercraft or hide clothing, or arranging for the temporary display of parts of 19th century museum collections in the communities of origin, the projects always engage skilled practitioners and museum experts in a collaborative setting. Sometimes called 'knowledge repatriation' projects, these efforts employ objects from museum collections to revitalize or enhance cultural knowledge or practice in a way that does not seek to reclaim or repatriate the objects 'but to re-own the knowledge and experiences that the objects embodied' (Fienup-Riordan 2005: xxvii). Two of these projects—both involving Tłı̨chǫ caribou skin lodges—will be briefly explored for what they have contributed to the ethnography of Dene mobile architecture in the Northwest Territories.

A Tale of Two Lodges

Historically, there were several different types of Tłı̨chǫ shelters, ranging in complexity from simple wind breaks to skin lodges. Winter houses, called *tsimǫkǫ* ('spruce house') used a conical structure of spruce poles, banked with branches and snow. Elders often refer to them as 'pitiful' implying that they were constructed only when absolutely needed and that people preferred to live in caribou skin lodges.[159] An A-frame house, called a 'split stick house' was also sometimes constructed in winter and elders note that it was particularly good for two families. It wasn't until the late 1800s that the Tłı̨chǫ began experimenting with log buildings, copying styles seen at trading posts.[160]

However, the conical lodge with a caribou skin covering was the primary habitation. Data from the 1891 Canadian census estimates that 711 Tłı̨chǫ were trading into Fort Rae, Northwest Territories, a Hudson's Bay Company post established in 1852 (Helm 1980). Assuming a conservative extended family size range of 7 to 10 people, and that each family might possess a single skin lodge, we can estimate that 70 to 100 Tłı̨chǫ lodges may have existed in 1891. Though lodges were repaired frequently with damaged skins or entire

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[159] Mason (1946:20) suggests that, among the Slavey, until the introduction of the gun, only the better hunters could secure skin lodges.

[160] Today, modern 'stick-built' houses are often procured through government building programs. Conical lodges, now typically covered with polyethylene tarps or plywood, sit adjacent to the house and are used as a 'smoke house' or storage facility.

panels replaced as required, the effective life of a lodge, elders tell us, was about 10 years (see Figure 28).

Figure 28: Tłįchǫ caribou skin lodges, many decorated with a red ochre band, at Fort Resolution, 1924 (NWT Archives N-1987-016-066).

Thus, the number of lodges that might have been made from first contact with Europeans to the time when the use of canvas tents replaced skin lodges—a period of approximately 12 decades from 1796 to about 1920—was relatively large, with an upper range of about 1200. Tłįchǫ oral tradition notes that due to their proximity to vast numbers of migratory barren ground caribou, Tłįchǫ seamstresses made lodges to trade with Slavey and Chipewyan living south of Great Slave Lake.[161] Consequently, the actual number of Tłįchǫ lodges produced during the first 12 decades of the contact period might have been significantly more than 1200. Despite this and to the best of our knowledge, only two lodge coverings have survived in museum collections.

The older of the two was purchased at Fort Rae on July 18, 1893 by Frank Russell (NAA MS 1274, f.14), a graduate student from the University of Iowa, who was travelling through the Northwest Territories on a natural history collecting trip. Russell purchased the lodge from a prominent Tłįchǫ trading chief known as Bear Lake Chief.[162] Russell's journal (NAA MS 1274) records that he paid $25 for the lodge and he used it as his primary habitation throughout his travels, eventually bringing it back to Iowa at the end of his trip, where it was given to the Natural History Museum at the University of Iowa, along with his other ethnographic and natural history collections. In 1997, with the assistance of the late

[161] Tłįchǫ trade practice would sometimes take them to Fort Resolution on the southern shore of Great Slave Lake, where they would have encountered local Slavey and Chipewyan groups.
[162] Bear Lake Chief was born ca. 1852. See chapter 4 for an extensive discussion.

anthropologist, June Helm,[163] the University of Iowa gifted the lodge to the Tłı̨chǫ and the people of the Northwest Territories and it now rests in the care of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC) in Yellowknife (Helm and Andrews 1998, 1999). The second lodge covering, a generation younger, was collected by an unknown collector in 1923 from 'Chief Martin' in Rae, and purchased by an agent of the Heye Foundation in 1951. Originally part of the Heye collection, the lodge is now in the care of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, DC. No record of the purchase price has survived. Virtually identical in design and engineering to the 1893 lodge, we are confident that the NMAI lodge is Tłı̨chǫ in origin and there is no reason to doubt the purchase location. See Table 7 for a comparative summary of both lodges.

In 1995, June Helm began to lobby the Board of Governors at the University of Iowa and the Director of the Natural History Museum to return the 1893 lodge to the north. Though carefully stored, it had never been displayed and was unlikely to be in the foreseeable future. The University Board of Governors agreed and representatives of the Tłı̨chǫ and the PWNHC travelled to Iowa City in 1997 to attend a gifting ceremony. When the 1893 lodge returned to Yellowknife in early 1998 the PWNHC hosted a large celebration and exhibit highlighting the Tłı̨chǫ lodge. Attended by over 1500 people the opening still stands as the largest public event ever held at the museum, testament to the lodge's importance in the eyes of the numerous Tłı̨chǫ elders who attended (Andrews and Mackenzie 1998). The lodge remained on exhibit for nearly eight months though eventually was retired to the collections storeroom to prevent the further impact of gravity pulling on the lodge's sinew-sewn seams. However, the day after the exhibit was dismantled two Tłı̨chǫ elders arrived at the museum and were disappointed to find that it was not available for viewing. Though they were invited to examine the folded lodge in storage, the moment demonstrated that elders expected that the lodge would always be available for viewing. In response we approached the Tłı̨chǫ Treaty 11 Council[164] to invite them to participate in a

[163] June Helm, an anthropologist based at the University of Iowa, had undertaken extensive research in the NWT beginning in 1951, mostly with the Tłı̨chǫ. June Helm passed away in 2004.

[164] Now the Tłı̨chǫ Government, following successful implementation of provisions of their self government and land claim completed in 2003.

Museum collection	Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife,	National Museum of the American Indian, Washington
Originating museum collection	University of Iowa Natural History Museum, Iowa City	Heye Foundation, New York, NY
Accession #	997.6.1	23891.000
Collector	Frank Russell	Unknown
Year collected	July 18, 1893	1923
Original owner	Bear Lake Chief	"Chief Martin"
Maker	Likely Emma Kowea, wife of Bear Lake Chief	unknown
Height	3.4 m (11 feet)	3.2 m (10.5 feet)
Weight	15.8 kg (35 lbs)	unknown
Length of bottom edge	17.4 m (57 feet)	15.4 m (50.5 feet)
Total number of hides	30	29
No. hides in bottom panel	15	15 + 2 infill sections
No. hides in middle panel	11	9
No. of hides in top panel	4	4
Decoration	3 hide tassels coloured with bands of red ochre; red ochre band painted over seam between bottom and middle panels	3 tassels made from red and blue wool stroud and hide fringes; faint traces of red ochre at several locations, but no pattern apparent.
Condition	Excellent; much evidence of smoke staining on interior side; small holes (from warble flies) have mostly be sewn closed	Excellent; little evidence of use on interior suggesting that the lodge was made for trade or on commission?

Table 7: Comparison of the two museum lodge coverings.

revitalization project which would see the creation of two replicas[165] of the 1893 lodge. In the fall of 1999 staff from the PWNHC joined the fall community caribou hunt at Grizzle Bear

[165] One lodge was for use in the Tłįchǫ school system, the other for permanent display at the PWNHC. Though the Tłįchǫ use their copy regularly in school programming, the PWNHC has yet to erect theirs in a permanent gallery installation.

Lake in the barrens in order to collect the 75 hides needed for the project. Over the fall, winter and next spring, the hides were brain-tanned and sewn into two new lodges, modelled on the pattern of the 1893 lodge. The entire project was documented on video tape, and a 29 minute documentary was produced (Woolf and Andrews 2000).

The hide tanning camp was established at a location near Rae that had road access, permitting school children from Behchokǫ, Yellowknife and Fort Providence to visit the site to learn about the process of tanning and sewing hides. As well, a small group of youth from the local school in Rae were selected to be 'apprentices' and allowed to spend more time at the camp to learn firsthand the traditional practices of tanning and sewing. Finally, in August of 2000, the two replicas were complete and erected at the Tłı̨chǫ Government's annual assembly in Rae. Attended by hundreds of Tłı̨chǫ from all four communities it offered an opportunity to celebrate the completion of the lodge and the skilled work of the seamstresses. It also provided yet another opportunity to talk about lives lived in lodges, their history and use. This will be discussed below.

When we learned of the second lodge at the National Museum of the American Indian in 2001, we began a dialogue with the museum and later, as a component of the Boreas Circumpolar Home, Hearth and Household project, a group of elders and staff from the PWNHC made two trips to Washington to study it. The 1923 lodge covering, as discussed above, is very similar to the 1893 lodge and differs only in a few details (see Figure 29 and Table 7). Importantly, the visits to the NMAI began an ongoing relationship between the Tłı̨chǫ and the museum, one that continues today.

As these projects evolved, there were numerous opportunities to focus discussions with elders on the culture of lodges. The information presented in the next three sections summarizes ethnographic data provided during these discussions, supplemented with data from historical accounts, archival photographs, and other ethnographic descriptions.[166]

Making Lodge Coverings

Made from tanned caribou hides, the lodges are light, durable, easily erected and waterproof, providing safe, warm habitation. Archaeological evidence suggests that conical lodges were used in this region for at least 5000 years (Wright 1972, 1976), though have

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[166] One elder, the late Elizabeth Mackenzie, was very important and I would like to acknowledge the time that she spent with me talking about lodges. Much of what is presented here expands on the exhibit guide we produced for the 1998 exhibition (Andrews and Mackenzie 1998).

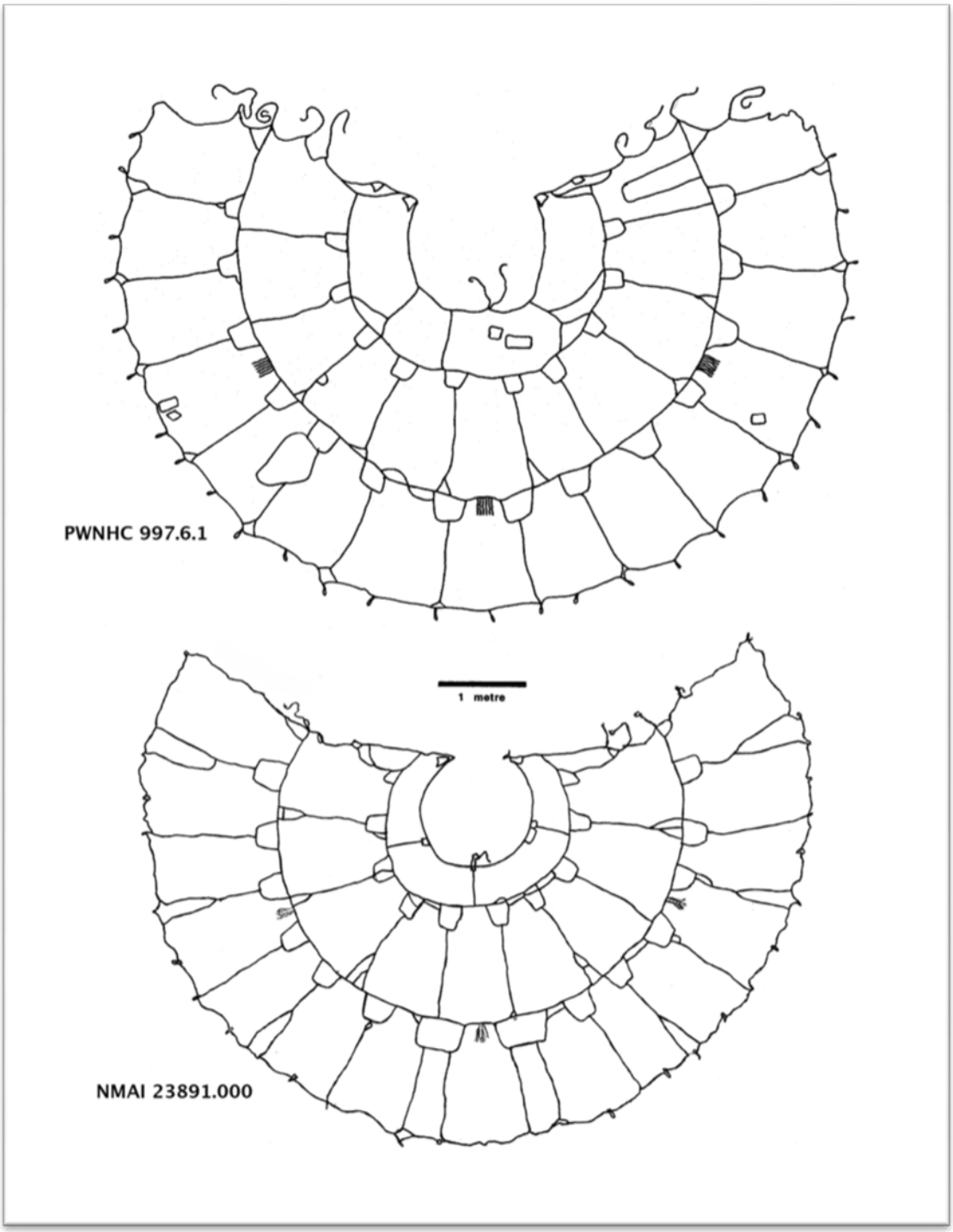

Figure 29: Scaled patterns comparing the two Tłįchǫ caribou skin lodges in museum collections.

probably been in use for much longer than that. Unlike the towering tipis of the North American Plains, Tłı̨chǫ lodges were lower in height, broader at the base in relation to height, with less steeply angled sides, and had a much larger smoke hole without the elaborate wind flaps found on Plains tipis (see Figure 30). In form, they are more similar in shape to reindeer lodges used by Evenkiis and other central Siberian peoples (Anderson 2006), though are significantly smaller in overall size and consist of a single panel as opposed to separate overlapping panels used in Siberia.[167] Caribou skin lodges are known as *ewò kǫ̀ nı̨hmbàa* (literally 'skin hearth lodge').

Having been tanned with the hair off, the hides are sewn into three panels— a bottom panel called *nı̨hmbàachǫ́ǫ́* (glosses as 'lodge bottom'), a middle panel known as *nı̨hmbàatani* ('lodge middle') , and a top panel called *nı̨hmbàakwı̨* (or 'lodge head'). The three panels are then sewn together. Women often worked in groups to tan and sew lodges, processing numerous hides and several lodges

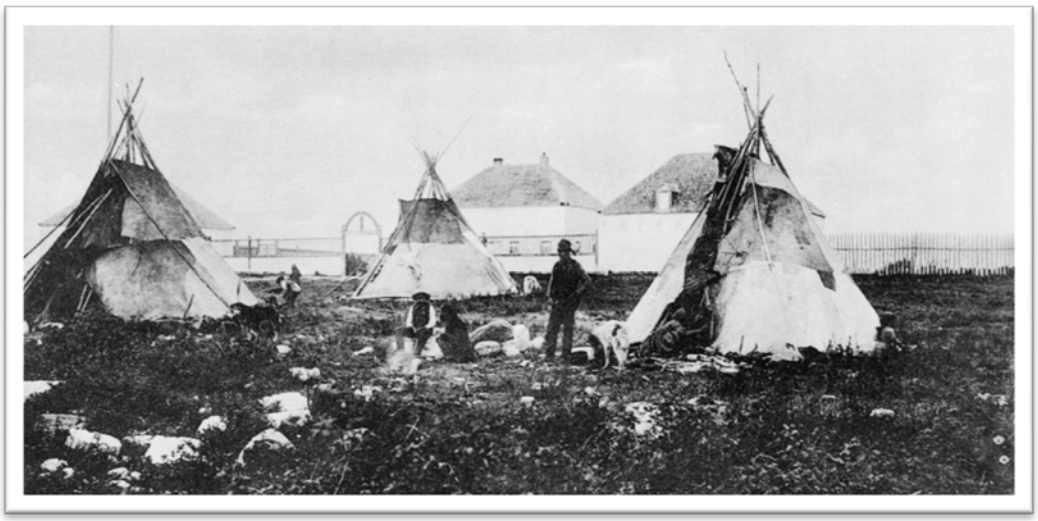

Figure 30: "Skin Lodges of the Dogrib Indians in front of H.B.Co's Fort, Great Slave Lake." (C.W. Mathers, NWT Archives N-1979-058-0007)

at a time. Though tanning[168] was often done near a lake in a camp setting, the ideal location for sewing the covering was a large, flat area of exposed sloping bedrock. The open area allowed women both room to work on such a large object and perspective to ensure that

[167] Samuel Hearne (1911: 207) noted that Chipewyan made lodges in separate panels of no more than five hides, tanned with the hair on.

[168] The tanning process has been described elsewhere (see Andrews and Mackenzie 1998).

the lodge panels were taking the appropriate semi-circular shape. The slight slope allowed the lodge covering to drape properly, making it easier to achieve the right shape—in essence, the land helps give both life and shape to the lodge.

Autumn hides were regarded as the best—from October or November—because they are thicker and the numerous holes created by warble fly larvae exiting from under the skin on the caribou's back in early summer were healed over. Caribou killed during October have strong tasting meat from the rut and women would make drymeat from it, saving it for dog food. Warble scars, sometimes opened during the tanning process, were sewn closed. In the bottom and middle panels, hides were sewn in anatomical position, with the the hair side facing out and the neck pointing to the head of the lodge. This left two spaces on either side of the neck—called *wek'ohgà*, or 'neck beside'—that were filled in with small pieces of hide. The hides are sewn with sinew using an overcast stitch (known as *echìwa k'ę̀ę̀ nàedli*). The strands of sinew are taken from the thoracolumbar fascia of the caribou's back. When the animals are field dressed, hunters take great care in preserving the thoracolumbar fascia, which is dried and later abraded to soften it. Individual strands—about 30 – 38 cm in length—are pulled free and three small bundles (about 20 – 25 strands each) are lightly braided and stored for later use. Seventy-five or more braids of sinew might be needed to complete a single lodge.

To affect the necessary drape over a cone-shaped pole structure the number of hides in each consecutive panel is reduced to create a curved, semi-circular covering. Though both of the museum examples are slightly different sizes (see Table 7 for comparisons) they contain nearly the same number of hides, 29 for the NMAI lodge and 30 for the PWNHC lodge. Larger lodges were said to have existed, made for large or co-habiting families. Stories often mention lodges made from 40, 45 or even 60 hides.[169]

Both of the museum lodges are decorated with three tassels sewn into the seam between the bottom and middle panels, such that they are equidistant when the lodge is set. On the 1893 lodge these tassels are made from tanned hide and consist of a central tab, decorated with a serrated edge and with eleven small diamond-shaped holes cut in a row down the middle axis. Five red ochre bands have been added between the diamond-shaped holes. On either side are sewn eight thinner strips of tanned hide. The bottom half of the 16 strips have been rubbed with red ochre (see Figure 31). In addition, a red ochre line, about 4

[169] Mason (1946:20) noted that lodges as large as 40 hides were used.

cm in width, has been painted around the lodge over the seam between bottom and middle panels.

Figure 31: A hide tassel decorated with red ochre from the 1893 lodge (T. Andrews/GNWT 1998).

The tassels on the 1923 lodge are much simpler in construction. The central tassel has a broader band of red wool stroud with four thin hide strips on either side. The other two are the same except that blue stroud is used in place of red. There is no red ochre line painted over the seam or on the tassels, though faint traces of ochre do appear at various places on the hide. In 2007, the NMAI used a variety of photographic techniques in an attempt to raise a pattern, though none could be discerned.

Red ochre, or *chii*, was used to decorate numerous objects such as snowshoes, toboggans, canoes, and lodges. Closely associated with *jk'ǫǫ*, or medicine power, ochre was regarded as a powerful substance, in part because of its colour which brings to mind the powers associated with blood, and was used as a way of protecting the object's owner or user from harm. Knowledge of places where ochre might be collected was protected and elders are still aware of them today. To make the lodge replicas, ochre was collected from a location on the Marion River (*Gòlò Tì Deè*) by a group of men who were married to the seamstresses, and joined by two others who had specific knowledge of the location. The

ochre was weeping from cracks in a rock face just a few feet from the river. Each man had a small can or plastic pail and attempted to collect fine powder and small chunks, but only after leaving a gift of a cigarette or a few coins, accompanied with a short statement of thanks in Tłįchǫ. After returning the ochre to camp, the women began to prepare it by removing larger pieces, breaking smaller ones into a fine powder, and then mixing the powder with water to make paint. Using their first two fingers, the women took turns painting red bands around the lodges.[170] Only the women participated in painting the lodges and rejected requests from men who offered to help (see Figure 32). Surrounding the lodge with ochre protected the occupants from harm. The tassels on one of the replicas were painted with ochre, mimicking the 1893 lodge. It was said, that by blowing in the wind they would frighten malevolent entities wishing to gain entrance to the lodge.

Analysis of historical photographs suggests that few other design motifs existed. A close examination of photographs dating from the early 1900s to the late 1920s has revealed only two other design motifs: numerous examples of no decoration at all, and a single example where what appears to be a thin (perhaps 6 cm in width) white appliqué of caribou hide (or canvas?) sewn around the middle of the top panel. In terms of relative frequencies of the four design motifs the lodges with no decoration and ones with tassels and an ochre band seem equally popular and significantly outnumber lodges with just tassels. As noted above, only a single example of the white appliqué was found. Elders were unable to recall any symbolic significance for the different decoration motifs existed, with one noting that they may have simply been expressions of choice made by the seamstresses.

Setting, Moving, Living

When a new lodge was made, it was 'christened' with a feast and a dance. As elder Elizabeth Mackenzie reported:

> The birchbark canoe, the willow bark net, the toboggan and the *ewò kǫ̀ nįhmbàa* were the most valuable of possessions and were 'christened' with a feast and dance. When a new lodge was finished the women would ask a man, 50 years old at least, to cut poles. It was an honour to be asked. In the old days, when we lived out on the land, the woman's husband would travel to Rae for supplies and then they would feast and dance.

[170] J. Alden Mason (1946:27) described an almost identical process in 1913.

Figure 32: Painting ochre on the lodge seam (T. Andrews/GNWT 2000).

Women not only made lodges but also set them up, maintained them, and carried them between camps; often this meant that women would play a significant role in choosing the camping location. When breaking camp, the poles were either left standing or leaned against a high branch in a nearby tree to prevent them from rotting on the ground. From 14 to 20 spruce poles, about 5.5 to 6 metres in length were needed to set a lodge. Three poles were tied together, lifted into place, and the remaining poles set against the upper arms of the tripod.[171] Poles were always trimmed of bark, unless the camp was for a brief, overnight duration. As old poles were frequently used when arriving at previously inhabited camp, removing the bark helped ensure they would not be weakened by sawyer beetles. As much of the Tłı̨chǫ landscape is formed by the Canadian Shield, large cobbles would be used to hold the skin covering to the ground on exposed bedrock. Lodges were also fitted out with peg loops and wooden pegs were used when possible. When travelling in summer, islands were preferred locations for camps. Being more windswept, they kept flying insects at bay and made bear encounters less likely (cf. Wheeler 1914a). Smoke holes on Tłı̨chǫ lodges were broader than on Plains tipis and therefore did not need the elaborate wind flaps common on the latter. They were constructed with small pockets on the outside surface in the corner of the free ends of the lodge head, called *nı̨hmbàadzi* (which glosses as 'lodge corner, extends into') into which special poles, called *wedzı̨̀ı̨ɔa* (glosses as 'into the pocket') (see Figure 33). Used primarily to help set the lodge, they could also be adjusted to help direct the smoke out of the lodge when required.[172]

In winter, lodges were set in an area swept clear of snow by snowshoes, often in thick copses of trees, protected from wind. Toboggans, turned on their side, might be leaned against the outside of the lodge to act as a windbreak and to keep dogs from entering. Brush and snow might be added as well (Mason 1946:20). In summer, brush was

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[171] Mason (1946:20) describes a four-pole foundation used during his visit in 1913, though I have never seen this practiced. The system he witnessed in 1913 used a forked pole into which three others are set, forming the four-pole foundation, to which the remaining poles were added. I have only seen people lay three poles on the ground, tie them together tightly with a stiff cord about 2 feet from the top, and lift the 3 pole unit into a tripod. Perhaps, the introduction of inexpensive cord sometime after Mason's 1913 visit inspired this innovation?

[172] Though it was not discussed in the context of the museum projects, June Helm (pers. comm. 30 October 1998) was told by a Tłı̨chǫ elder that a separate small tarp (made from two hides sewn together), held in place at the top of the lodge by poles, was used to direct the wind from blowing down the hole. Ernest Thompson Seton (1914: 149) illustrated a similar set-up for the Denesųłine (or Chipewyan).

frequently piled along the outside edge of the lodge to keep dogs from entering or from urinating on it. When travelling alone in the barrens in winter, hunting caribou, musk ox, or for trapping, men would load sleds with firewood at the treeline, carrying their tent poles on top. If their journeys took longer than planned, lodge poles could be burned. In times of necessity, lodges could be set with just two poles, using lines and weighted toboggans as

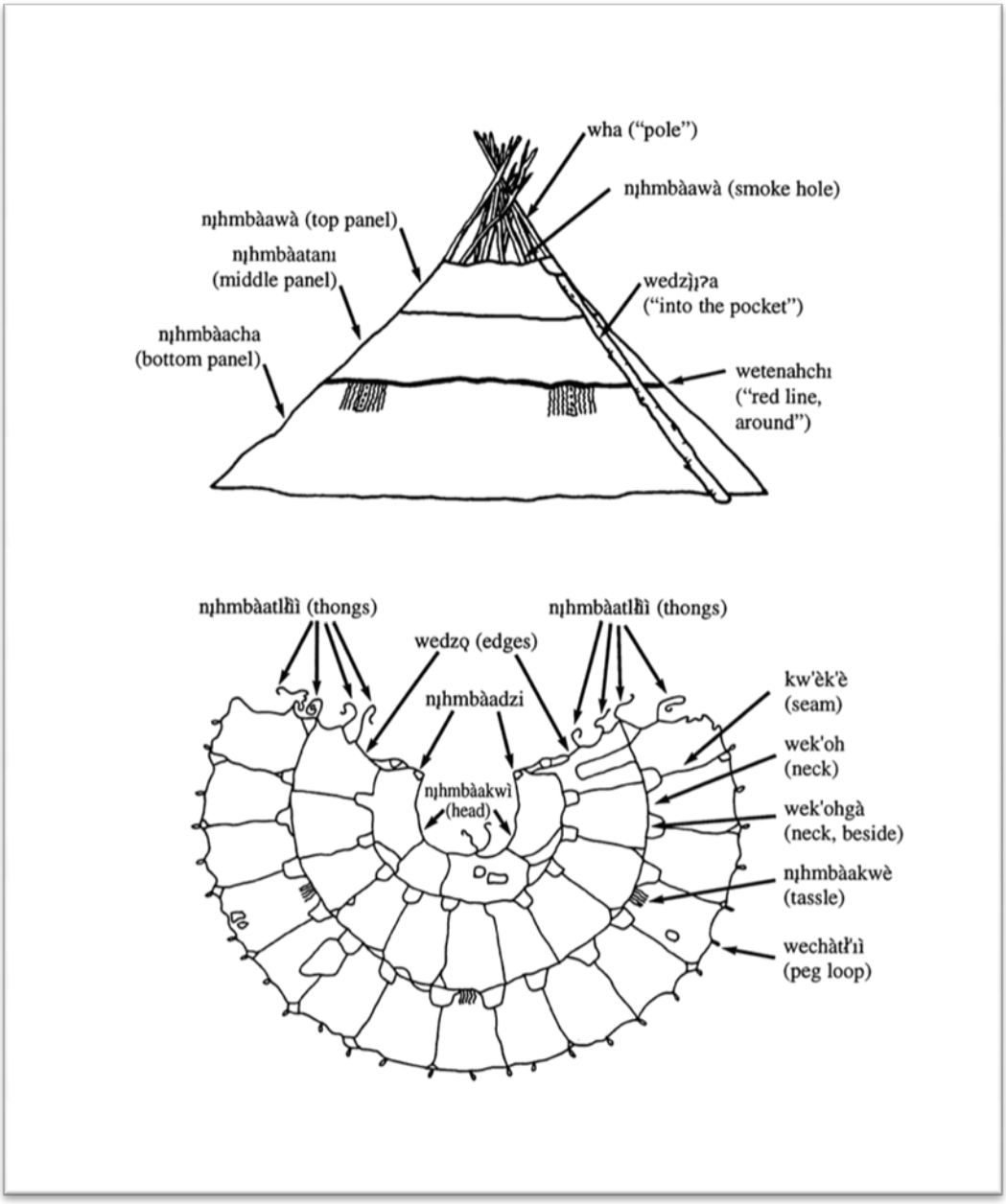

Figure 33: Tłı̨chǫ names for the lodge's components.

counterbalance (Mason 1946:16). In both winter and summer, the floor was always covered with spruce boughs, providing insulation from the cold ground, and a fresh fragrance to the lodge. A central hearth was used and will be described in the next section.

Skin lodges were the primary form of habitation until the early 1920s when canvas tents replaced them. Introduced as a trade item early in the 1900s, canvas tents at first proved impractical since there was no way to let smoke from the hearth escape. During this period of transition, photographs from the early 1900s often show hybrids of caribou skin lodges with canvas tents attached. During this period, photographs also show lodges with canvas patches or made entirely from the material. With the introduction of portable steel stoves in the late 1920s, however, canvas tents became popular and quickly replaced skin lodges, giving women tremendous time and labour savings in the bargain, at the cost of having to carry a much heavier habitation. The 1893 lodge weighed just under 16 kg where an 8x12 foot canvas tent will weigh more than twice that. During the exhibit opening in 1998, Tłı̨chǫ elder Joe Mackenzie told this humorous story about this time of change:

> In the old days when we went to trade at the [Hudson's] Bay, they gave us a canvas tent as a gift. We had never seen one before and they didn't tell us how to set it up. We took the tent back to camp and the women spread it on the ground. For three days we left it there. We walked around it trying to figure out how it worked. Finally the women cut it up and made a lodge out of it. It made a very good lodge.

Interior Arrangement and Social Space

At the centre of every lodge was the fire, called *kǫ̀*, contained in the *kǫ̀k'e*, meaning 'fireplace' or 'hearth'. Fire is so central to life that the word is also used to denote 'house', 'building' and 'town' or 'settlement'. Hearths were surrounded by a spruce pole cut with seven evenly spaced notches and bent to form a hexagon. Called a *dakwìtǫǫ*, it was held in place by wooden pegs. Filled in with dirt and ash it created a raised *det'ǫ*, or 'nest' for the fire, which provided for better draft (cf. Wheeler 1914a) (see Figure 34). Sometimes, when lodges were set over bedrock, a small pavement of stones would be used to create the

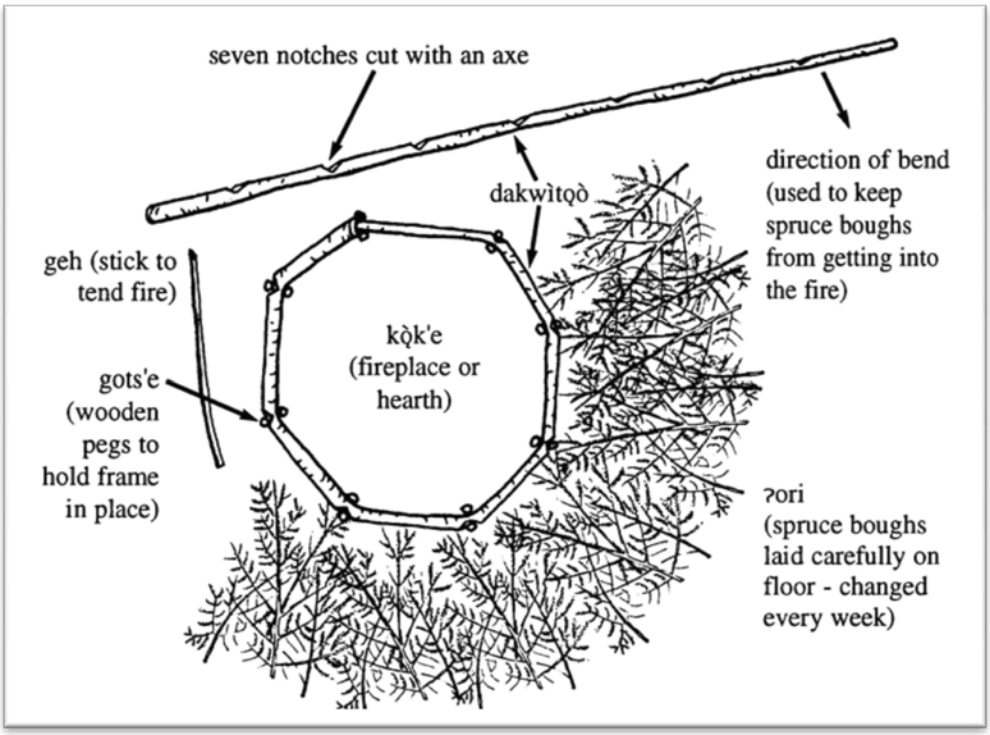

Figure 34: The layout of the interior hearth.

'nest'. In settings were expedience was required, a ring of small rocks, or larger pieces of firewood could be used to contain the fire.

Fires were not only critical for survival, but were used to communicate with a world where ancestral spirits dwelled. Through ceremonies called 'feeding the fire', inhabitants would provide food offerings to ancestors, asking for safe travel conditions, luck in hunting, good weather, or other similar wishes in return. Since the coming of Christianity, these ceremonies were often held on Sundays near a grave of a prominent elder. Offerings of food were made into the lodge hearth or wood stove on Fridays, a practice continued by many elders today. Because the fire could be used to reach another world, the stick used to tend it, called a *geh*, was never used for other purposes and always treated with reverence.

Though lodges lacked purposeful doors, as any part of the edge could be lifted to enter, the main entrance was where women tended to work and sleep. Called *kaga*, or 'front', it was also where small amounts of wood for the fire were stored and where the main cooking preparation would be done. Opposite the entrance was the *kwèelǫ*, or 'back' of the lodge, an area usually reserved for men or guests (cf. Mason 1946:20; Figure 35). As such, the lodge had informal male and female sides. Wishing to avoid proscriptions for women stepping over the blood of freshly killed animals, especially at menses, men would

lift the edge of the covering near their sleeping place to bring fresh meat or hunting equipment into the lodge.

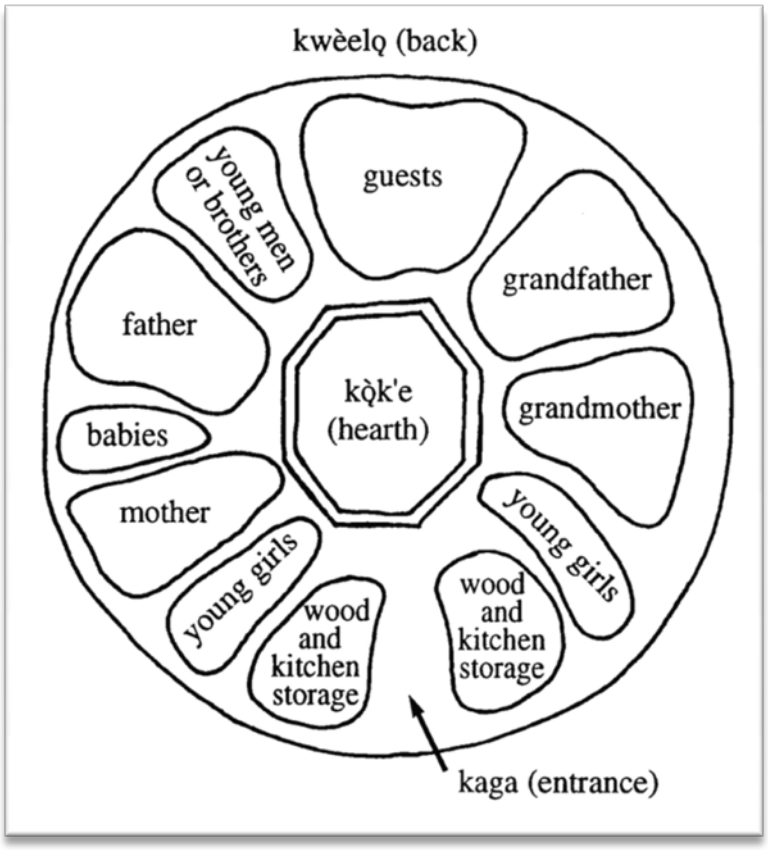

Figure 35: An interior arrangement for an extended family.

There were no set rules for orientation of the lodge. In situations where numerous lodges were set together, the entrances might face each other. In situations where the lodges were set on a narrow clearing beside a lake or river they might all face the water. Personal gear was stored at the edge of the lodge and people generally slept with their feet toward the fire, though other arrangements were common. In winter, the canvas or moosehide 'wrapper', the long open bag attached to a toboggan might be removed and brought inside the lodge to line the edge and used to store tools and supplies. Bedding was rolled up each morning and kept at the edge, clearing the main part of the floor for work. Spruce boughs were replaced every two or three days by the women, often with the assistance of young children.

Above the fire, at head height, a rack made from spruce poles was used to suspend meat for drying, or to dry articles of clothing. A long cord, with a wooden hook attached to the end was suspended from the centre of the rack, allowing metal pots, metal baskets, or

other cooking apparatus to dangle over the fire (Figure 36). Collecting firewood and tending the fire was a shared duty and both women and men were proficient with axes. Heavy cutting and retrieval of large logs was left to the men and often young people would be encouraged to do much of the light collecting. Though gender roles were important and respected both men and women were generally proficient with all tasks and could get by in any emergency.

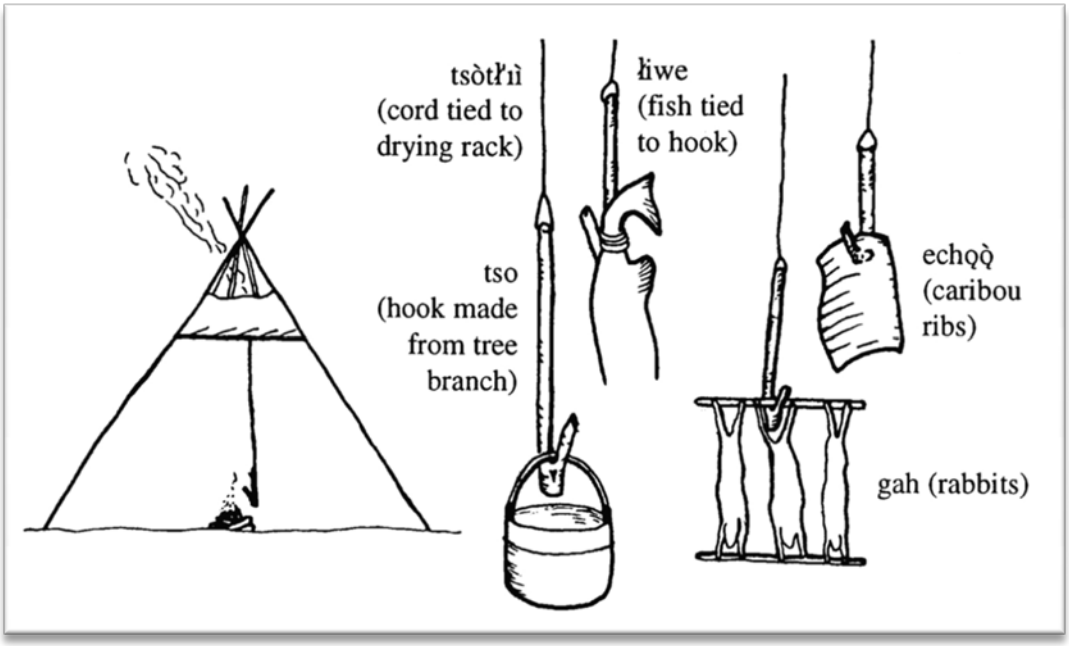

Figure 36: Cooking in the lodge.

Dogs were never allowed inside, though often had houses built for them in nearby dog 'yards'. Frequently dogs were left loose in camp which meant that brush needed to be piled around the outer edge to keep them at bay. Other functional spaces outside the lodge were linked with interior ones. For example, food was moved from outside to inside hearths, or vice versa. Waste created in the lodge was disposed of outside in designated waste areas and always in accordance with spiritual beliefs. For example, remains of terrestrial animals such as caribou or moose could not be disposed of in the fire[173] or water

[173] This may appear contradictory to findings from numerous archaeological deposits where dimunuted and calcined bone, presumably from terrestrial animals, is frequently found in hearth deposits in subarctic contexts. Harry Simpson, a Tłı̨chǫ elder explained that the practice of making 'bone grease', where the bones are smashed into small fragments and boiled to render their tallow or 'grease' is not seen as being disrespectful to the animal, and this transformation permits the waste bone fragments to be disposed of in the hearth.

and were usually piled neatly and discretely at the edge of camp. Waste from aquatic animals (fish, beavers, ducks etc) was always returned to the water. Wood was cut outside the lodge and small amounts would be stored near the women's entrance and near the fire. Many tasks—making or repairing tools, cutting fish or drymeat—could be moved inside or out, depending on weather or season. When working outside, however, one always needed to be cognizant of the presence of dogs and that they might steal food or upset a project.

Part II: Values, Enskilment, Creativity and Implications for Collecting in the 21st Century

Turning now to Part II of the chapter I would like to explore how these revitalization projects find meaning in the context of Dene life and reflect core societal values. Following an examination of basic values and value frameworks, I will discuss how creativity and the process of improvisation direct an enskilled practice. Finally, I would like to reflect on how this might inform modern museum practice.

Many Athapaskanist anthropologists have noted four basic values common to all Dene societies. These include individual industriousness and capability, generosity, personal autonomy, and lastly, emotional or personal restraint in social interaction (Rushforth and Chisholm 1991). Rushforth and Chisholm (1991) demonstrate that not only are these values held by all Northern Athapaskans, but also among Pacific Coast and Southern Athapaskan societies as well, which suggests they have great antiquity and predate the Pacific and Southern Athapaskan Diaspora. Furthermore, they demonstrate that these values have remained historically stable, persisting through times of rapid change that have had dramatic impacts on other aspects of culture. Though these four values are interrelated and indivisible for defining what constitutes a competent or capable person, two values—individual industriousness and personal autonomy—are particularly important to the discussion here. Being industrious and self-reliant by 'knowing how to do things' is highly valued in all Dene societies. June Helm has noted that individuals who exhibit a 'commitment to hard work and physical endurance' (for the Tłı̨chǫ; Helm 1972) or 'superior ability' (amongst the Slavey; Helm 1956), are recognized as being capable and self-reliant. These qualities, she argues, are related to prestige and are central to Dene leadership (Helm 1956). Autonomy, or 'being your own boss' as Rushforth's (1984) Sahtuot'ine consultants phrased it, is also important. Indeed, in current wage labour settings, positions such as 'foreman' or 'manager' are translated into the Tłı̨chǫ vernacular as *k'àowo dee*, or 'big boss,' a mild invective as it refers to someone who shows no skills of their own and only oversees capable persons.

In reviewing Sahtuot'ine values, Rushforth and Chisholm (1991) describe and analyze a fifth value, called *séodı̨t'e* (which loosely translates as 'care' or 'control'), that acts to integrate the other values in an operational framework. When Rushforth asked the Sahtuot'ine to describe *séodı̨t'e*, they noted that it is the most highly esteemed type of behaviour but preferred to recite a series of stories which demonstrated it in action rather than try to define its basic characteristics. In these stories, the protagonist, though proficient in some skills, often exhibits weakness and an inability to conform to cultural norms with respect to a variety of other activities, most notably those related to hunting and is teased and chastised by members of his group as a result. In response, the protagonist rises to the occasion, often involving mitigating a critical food shortage, and exhibits proficiency in all of the areas he was criticized for earlier, bringing food or other resources to his family and other members of his group, all the while showing no hubris. Through this skilful display, always performed alone and without assistance of others, and his subsequent restraint and generosity toward his former tormentors, he becomes a highly respected member of society. Individuals, either men or women, with *séodı̨t'e*, are thus recognized as 'capable' individuals, mastering the values of industriousness, autonomy, generosity, and restraint.

The Tłı̨chǫ have similar ways of denoting a capable person that are rooted in core values. Anyone, including animal-persons, who proficiently carry-out a particular task can be described as being *nàghòò*, or 'capable'. For example, a young boy skillfully using an axe to chop wood, or a fox pouncing on a mouse under the snow, might be said to be *nàghòò*. People who are capable of complex tasks, or who exhibit a wide-ranging capacity, would be known as *hats'ele ha dii-le*, or 'someone who can do [the task]'. For example, the seamstresses may assess their capacity for completing a lodge and conclude *weghàlats'eda ha dii-le*, or 'we can do it'. The phrase recognizes their skilful capacity to complete the task at hand. Finally, someone recognized widely as being an extremely capable person may be said to be *wexǫ̀zǫ*, or 'a very capable person'. These expressions operate in a fashion similar to *séodı̨t'e* in that they provide a way of denoting individuals who uphold the values important to all Dene societies and who are known for their skillful, creative practice.

As Tim Ingold (2000:5) has noted, skills are 'incorporated into the *modus operandi* of the developing human organism through training and experience in the performance of particular tasks'. He also notes that stories are an important means for guiding the attention of listeners into the world (Ingold 2000:190). Recently, Thorsten Gieser (2008:299) has suggested that emotion plays a role as a learning mechanism in developing skills, by filtering

the attention of the apprentice through empathy with a skilled practitioner. Could it be that stories act in the same way by allowing the apprentice to learn through an empathetic relationship with the story's protagonist? Listening to stories, especially those that highlight the Sahtuot'ine qualities of *séodı̨t'e*, allow the apprentice to become immersed in the allegorical world of a capable and skilled practitioner, thereby contributing to his knowledge (Cruikshank 2005:9). Being inside a story world, young apprentices can imagine themselves using their own personal knowledge, experience and skills to perform the feats of the narrative protagonist, without the emotional cost of criticism that might ensue in an experiential setting. When combined with the hands-on experience gained from working closely with skilled practitioners, young apprentices have an opportunity to gauge their own proficiency, at least at an imaginary level. During the conduct of the various revitalization projects, story-telling formed a significant part of the experience, clearly intended as part of the apprentices' education. If we can accept that Dene stories serve a kind of archive (cf. Andrews, Zoe and Herter 1998) that skilled practitioners can call upon, perhaps when a need to improvise arises, then the emotional embodiment of the stories is a way to organize them for later recall. In the process, the stories also help youth learn important societal values, an important aspect of *becoming* Dene.

During our various revitalization projects, evenings were almost always spent listening to elders tell stories. Stories about hand games were a popular subject. Tłı̨chǫ hand games (see Helm and Lurie 1966 for an extensive treatment) have tremendous societal significance and stories about them often relate supernatural activities of important individuals from the past.[174] Traditionally played by men at times of ingathering to the trading post (Treaty time, Christmas, Easter) and frequently associated with other festive activities (feast, dances etc), hand games are a fast paced guessing game played by two opposing teams. While one team (of up to 12) secretly hides an object (called an *idzi*) in one hand or the other, the other team appoints a captain who tries to guess which hand it is hidden in. The captain uses a complex set of over 50 hand signals to indicate the particular hands he is guessing. With a loud clap, the captain gestures one of the signals, simultaneously guessing for each man of the opposite team. Sticks are used to keep tally, and the teams switch back and forth taking turns at guessing and hiding, and the team that wins two rounds wins the game. Behind each team sits a row of drummers, but only the

[174] See Helm and Lurie (1966:86-7) for a story involving Bear Lake Chief using his medicine power to win a hand game.

drummers behind the side hiding the *idzi* drum, playing a loud, fast and powerful rhythmic drum song. The powerful drums resonate in the chests of the players and spectators alike, making for an exciting embodied experience shared by all. The *idzi* men move rhythmically with the beat and in combination with grand gestures with arms and bodies make for a emotional spectacle, that with the loud drumming, serve to disconcert the opposition. Often associated with betting, the game is still popular today when significant prizes are challenged for in large tournaments. [175]

In the evening, after a long day of practice-led teaching, elders will entertain youthful apprentices with stories and hand games are always a popular subject. Hand game stories typically focus on amazing feats of individuals who use their various capacities to win games in challenging or even dangerous, if not life-threatening situations. Sometimes the stories lead to an impromptu game, recalling a time when they were a popular past time when families were encamped for fall caribou hunts (Helm and Lurie 1966: 82). Regardless, the impact on the youth is apparent for several days as young boys pair off to try newly learned hand signals or body gestures on their opponent, and can often be seen consulting with elders about the finer points of the game. The stories highlight the qualities of *séodjt'e* and help the youth learn societal values and in the process teach what it means to be Dene.

Creativity, Improvisation, and Enskilled Practice

During the course of the first lodge project, it became clear that the two 'replicas' were anything but exact copies of the 1894 'original'. Though one was a reasonable likeness—it would have fit well within the range of lodges in any of the historical photographs surviving from the early 20th century—the other was not, since the seamstresses added an elaborate fringe that ran entirely around the lodge. It was also apparent that the best of the caribou hides were incorporated into this lodge. When I asked why they had chosen to 'break with tradition,' they explained that they wanted the best looking lodge to go to the museum and were taking steps to dress it up a little by adding the fringe (see Figure 32).

In an epilogue to a book presenting the Athapaskan collection of the Haffenreffer Museum (Hail and Duncan 1989) entitled 'Women's Work, Women's Art' June Helm (1989:121-2) notes:

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[175] Today hand games are also played at the international Arctic Winter Games and other regional sport gatherings where the traditional practice of allowing only men to play has been discarded.

> A woman's aesthetic standards and pride in her handiwork do not start with the decorative elements with which, past and present, she has embellished items of hide apparel. The hide itself is subject to aesthetic appraisal. To gain approval, the dressed hide must be supple, smoothly and evenly scraped, and smoked an even, rich golden brown. An elegant pair of moccasins must display not only attractive designs and colors executed in fine floss-work or veil-stitched beading; the hide must also be handsome. ... For many of the finest creations of a "bush" Indian wife, her husband served as a kind of travelling art gallery. When men went by dog team to the trading fort, particularly at Christmastime and Eastertime, to trade their furs, their wives usually stayed behind. But the embroidered or beaded yoke of her husband's parka and his decorated moccasins, newly-made for him to wear at the fort, advertised a woman's handiwork afar.

Not surprisingly I think, the creative practice of making things, where skilled practitioners, using knowledge and experience to complete an object—even utilitarian things like lodges and articles of clothing—can serve as a way of demonstrating ones creativity. Reflecting on the process of creativity and cultural improvisation, Ingold and Hallam (2007: 7, emphasis original) note that following a tradition 'is a matter not of replicating a fixed pattern of behaviour, but of *carrying on*'. Copying something, they note (ibid: 5), is not a 'simple, mechanical process of replication' but rather a complex interaction between a skilful practitioner and a model—or a tradition—a process that is more in line with the concept of improvisation. The Tłįchǫ use the word *gonaèwo*, to describe 'our way of life'. For the seamstresses, while tradition or *gonaèwo* may have been the architect, they were the 'builders' and improvised on the 'original' design as the situation dictated. In so doing, they uphold Dene values of personal industriousness and capability. In short, their actions demonstrate that creativity and improvisation are essential components of enskilled knowing and enveloped within value frameworks such as *séodįt'e* or the Tłįchǫ concept of *wexǫ̀zǫ*. Their actions support the notion that tradition is not a set rule or dictum blindly followed, but rather a *design* guiding skilful practice, while allowing improvisation when appropriate. In other words, a skilled practitioner must also be a creative one, capable of improvising when required to do so. Young apprentices watch and listen to skilled practitioners as they carry out their tasks and, later, use their own hands to improvise on what they have been taught and in this way, as Ingold and Hallam note, culture carries on.

Implications for collecting in the 21st Century

What does this mean for museums collecting today? Clearly there is an important role for anthropology in all aspects of museum practice, something that Nancy Lurie (1981) called for more than 25 years ago. For a museum like the one I work for, where a majority of our constituency is comprised of Aboriginal communities, a focus solely on collecting objects would seem to be missing an important aspect of Dene culture. Collecting objects must also involve recording the practice of making them. In situations where the knowledge and skills have been lost, museum objects should be used whenever possible to help restore them.

For my own institution, despite years of collaborative work with Aboriginal communities doing just these sorts of things, there exists no formal mechanism, either in the museum's mandate or its collections strategy, to endorse or facilitate this approach. Collaboration has been the practice of a few staff, not endemic to the operational procedures of the institution. Yet, our collaborative projects have clearly demonstrated profound benefits for Aboriginal communities as they provide meaningful opportunities for elders and youth to interact in a traditional setting where apprentices learn from skilled practitioners. They provide benefits for museums as well by having knowledgeable elders and artisans examining their collections to provide sources of information pertinent to the objects' history, manufacture, use, cultural context and setting.

Consistently, whether making mooseskin boats, birchbark canoes, kayaks, or caribou skin lodges, elders agreed to participate only if the project was designed to involve young apprentices, usually in a camp setting outside of the community. Indeed, as educational experiences, the further from the distractions of 'town,' the more successful the projects were likely to be. For elders, it provided an opportunity to return to a traditional teaching setting, where the direct hands-on experience of making things can be interspersed with opportunities to interact with youth in other ways: Sharing a tent, communal making and eating of food, checking fishnets or collecting firewood together. Telling stories was a particularly important part of these projects and elders were careful to make time for them at night where they served to broaden the cultural context for the hands-on work that consumed much of the day. For elders, the context was more important than the object.[176]

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[176] See, for example, Andrews and Zoe 1997 for a list of the conditions elders required in order to agree to participate in a cultural resource inventory project.

It should come as no surprise that for highly mobile Athapaskans, individual skills, knowledge and experience are regarded as more valuable than the objects created through skilled practice, something that Robin Ridington (1982, 1983, 1994) has spoken about at length. He notes that Northern Athapaskans value knowledge and skills over material possessions, noting the adaptive advantage that using techniques held in the mind in concert with tools easily fashioned from local materials has over a complex material culture that is difficult to carry long distances. He suggests that these technologies emphasize *artifice* over *artifact.* Expressed another way, *practice* is more important than *product*.

Recognizing that 'improvisation is a cultural imperative' (Bruner 1993:322, as cited in Ingold and Hallam 2007:2), challenges the need for stringent, inflexible tests of authenticity so commonly applied in the field of heritage preservation and museum practice (cf. Andrews and Buggey 2008). Whether they are acknowledging the skilled practice required to make utilitarian objects like willow bast nets, or improvising on tradition when decorating a skillfully constructed lodge, elders' primary focus is to contribute to the experiential education of youth, allowing them to learn core Dene values through the process of becoming skilled practitioners. For museums today, replicating this setting in the context of knowledge repatriation or cultural revitalization projects brings significant benefits to all participants, while helping to ensure that both practice and product are carried on.

Chapter 7: Grieving and the Perception of Time in Dene Experience: A Personal Reflection

Introduction

The verb *grieve* comes to English from the old French verb *grever*, and from the older Latin, *gravāre,* both meaning 'to burden'.[177] This idea is shared in the Tłı̨chǫ phrase *goı̨ni nànietì,* which expresses a collective sense of being burdened mentally and physically by sorrow. Grief, then, is an embodied emotion, a sense of sorrow that is felt in the form of physical pain and mental anguish, carried in our memories, and expressed outwardly in our tears and other bodily actions. Reflecting on a career that has spanned four decades I am reminded of many times when I have had to grieve elder friends who passed away and, with each loss, I feel burdened by a sense that a door to the past was inching closer to being closed forever as these elders—the last to be born and raised on the land—leave us to our own realities. These experiences, however, have inspired me to reflect on my own process of grieving and have helped me in instances where I have had to deal with the loss of members of my own family.

One loss was particularly painful for me: Harry Simpson, a Tłı̨chǫ elder who I worked with closely for three decades, passed away in April, 2007 and, as I write this, a wave of grief washes over me still as I remember him. I first meet Harry in his home community of Gamètì in 1982. Then, I was employed by the Dene Nation as a researcher working on land use and occupancy data, part of the Dene Mapping Project, a research group dedicated to providing support to the land claim negotiations underway at the time (Asch, Andrews and Smith 1986). The mapping project had collected trail data from over 600 Dene hunters and trappers and part of my work involved capturing these data in a digital format and, using a geographical information system, to analyze and present them in meaningful ways to support the land claim negotiations the Dene were engaged in. In the spring of 1982, with bundles of computer plots showing traditional trails for the Tłı̨chǫ region, I travelled to Gamètì to report on our progress to the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council. So it was, in the old community hall, with a crackling fire in the large woodstove at the centre of the room, elders and community members sitting in a large circle around it, the air oppressive with the heat of the stove and the smoke from a multitude of cigarettes, that I made my presentation and met Harry Simpson for the first time. At the end of my presentation, Harry rose and in Tłı̨chǫ thanked me for the work that our project had undertaken but, he said, "Now that you

[177] Both also give English the word 'grave'.

have the trails, it's time for you to learn the place names and stories that go with them". This comment, as I was to learn later, reflected an age old relationship between the Tłı̨chǫ and the landscape, and one that would lead much of my own research for the coming decades. Unfortunately, collecting the place names and stories was not a task then needed by the Dene Nation to demonstrate their land use and occupancy to federal government to support their land claim negotiations so I was directed to focus my work on other more pressing matters. Over the next decade Harry and I encountered each other many times, though we never had an opportunity to discuss his comment in any length.

However, I remembered his comment about the link between place names and stories and when I began work as an archaeologist in Yellowknife in 1990 I returned to Gamètì to ask Harry if he would now teach me the names and stories. He agreed and, with John B. Zoe acting as a co-researcher and interpreter, we began a partnership that lead us to canoe through thousands of kilometres of the Tłı̨chǫ cultural landscape, a partnership that was to last until Harry's death in 2007. Over these years, which provided some of the most memorable experiences of my life, Harry taught me much about life on the land, a body of experience and knowledge that has lead to changes in my own worldview and lifeways: Much of his knowledge is presented in the chapters in this thesis. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Harry and I continued our collaboration by teaching together at a science camp located on the barrenlands north of Yellowknife, an area that Harry knew well as he had trapped and hunted there as a young man. In explaining his early trapping activities to the high school students who attended the camp, Harry shared with them the knowledge that he had so freely shared with me over the years. One year, in introducing our joint lesson to the students, Harry referred to me as his son and with no more ceremony that that, it seems, I was adopted. From that point on he always introduced me as his son and I took to referring to him as my father.

When Harry Simpson passed away, the sense of grief that washed over me was profound for I felt that not only had I lost a father, but somehow the world had lost an important knowledge source, without which our survival as a species was at risk. That I had lost my birth father just two months earlier made the sense of Harry's loss all the deeper. In this brief chapter, following a cursory review of the historical and ethnographic literature with respect to death and grieving, I will reflect on the end of life and its link to the embodied past in Dene society, for they are linked through the observances of grieving. Though the intent is to present an overview of this subject, one often lacking in the ethnographic literature for Northern Athapaskans, it is an aspect of my own grieving for

Harry Simpson and so the chapter will include a description of his passing and funeral. I will conclude with a brief discussion of the embodiment of time and temporality in Dene life, with special reference to grieving.

Death and Grieving in Historical Perspective

The historical literature presents a model of Dene grieving that includes an extended period of mourning, scarification, singeing or cutting of hair, and destruction of personal property. In one of the earliest descriptions of grieving Alexander Mackenzie (1903 [1789]: clxxxvii), in reference to the Chipewyan, notes:

> Besides, they manifest no common respect to the memory of their departed friends, by a long period of mourning, cutting off their hair, and never making use of the property of the deceased. Nay, they frequently destroy or sacrifice their own, as a token of regret and sorrow.

The cutting of hair in mourning is a common practice in many societies (cf. Hallpike 1969; Leach 1958). For the Dene, who valued long hair as a sign of beauty (Slobodin 1981b), chopping it short would be a powerful signal of grief and a Tłįchǫ legend suggests that the practice is quite old. In the story of the Merganser and Grebe,[178] the subject of hair-cutting at times of mourning is prominent. A paraphrased version of the story, as told by Harry Simpson, comments on both the value of long, black hair and the impact cutting it has at time of grief:

> *Kwo degootso* (red-breasted merganser; *Mergus serrator*) and *Nǫ̀htà* (horned grebe; *Podiceps auritus*) were brothers and were flying home. They landed on the lake near their camp, where they changed into their human form and began to walk to their tents. When they arrived they found the camp abandoned by their family members. Only *Tatsǫ̀* (Raven) was sitting in their camp. *Tatsǫ̀* (Raven) told them that all of their family was dead, while knowing full well that they weren't. *Kwo degootso* and *Nǫ̀htà* started to grieve. Crying loudly, they asked *Tatsǫ̀*, "What can we do to feel better?" *Tatsǫ̀* was the oldest of all so everyone listened to him. "Well," he said, "if you cut your hair you'll forget the past, because it is behind you. And

[178] This story was used to discuss other aspects of the role of narrative in Dene social history. The story is from Andrews (Fieldnotes, June 29th 1991, pp.27-8)

> besides, it will make you look very distinctive and no one will forget you." Both *Kwo degootso* and *Nǫ̀htà* had beautiful, long black hair. They didn't know that *Tatsǫ̀* really wanted to cut their hair so that they wouldn't look better than him. *Nǫ̀htà* went first and *Tatsǫ̀* grabbed his hair with one hand (for he had changed into a man, too) and his *kwebeh* ('stone knife') with the other and, whoosh, off came *Nǫ̀htà*'s hair, cut close to the scalp. Next it was *Kwo degootso*'s turn. *Tatsǫ̀* grabbed his hair in the same fashion but, just in time, *Kwo degootso* realized it was a trick and as *Tatsǫ̀* slashed with his *kwebeh*, *Kwo degootso* pulled his head forward, leaving a jagged, ragged cut. Soon after their families came back from their fishing spot and *Kwo degootso* and *Nǫ̀htà* realized that *Tatsǫ̀* had only tricked them so that he would have the most beautiful hair. But that is why the *Nǫ̀htà* and *Kwo degootso* look like they do today.

In the Tłı̨chǫ perception of time, the stories of the raven are from an age long ago when humans and animals were undifferentiated and had the power of changing form. It is a time—sometimes called the 'old world'—of chaos and stories are told without reference to the arrow of time, what some anthropologists have called 'floating time'. They are regarded as the oldest stories.[179] Though told to entertain today and as a way of explaining the physical appearance of the two waterfowl protagonists, the story clearly addresses the practice of cutting hair at times of grief. Interestingly, it also offers a possible reason: That memories of the past are embodied in hair and by cutting it off, painful memories can also be severed, something I will discuss in greater detail in the discussion.

Long periods of mourning, sometimes lasting several days and characterized by wailing while lying prostrate on the ground, were often reported. Destruction of the personal property of the deceased was extensive and sometimes extended to the destruction of the family's property, including clothing, habitation, and tools. Scarification included cutting or piercing of the arms and hands and Mackenzie notes that some Athapaskan women severed parts of their fingers, removed fingernails, or peeled back the skin from ends of their fingers before amputating them (Mackenzie 1903: 135; 141-2; cf. Honigmann 1964: 141). Sometimes, faces were blackened with charcoal, clothing was slashed, and hair was chopped short. Among the Gwich'in, grief sometimes caused

[179] See chapter 3 for further discussion on this theme.

individuals to attempt to commit suicide by throwing themselves in the water (Krech 1996: 204). However, by the mid-nineteenth century, Richardson (1851:21) notes that scarification and destruction of personal property beyond that of the deceased was disappearing and only rarely practiced.

Early burial practices included the use of scaffolds, tree burials, or leaving the corpse on the surface, sometimes covered with logs (cf. Franklin 1828; Mackenzie 1903). Sometimes a pennant was raised near the scaffold to "amuse and keep the ghost near the grave, thus preventing it from haunting the living" (Savishinsky and Hara 1981: 320). Though Krech (1982, 1996) records the internment of a Gwich'in chief in a grave with a picket fence as early as 1828[180], this practice of burial was not common until after the appearance of Christian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century. Fences were seen as a way of containing the spirit of the deceased, which was believed to linger at the gravesite for a few days or weeks.[181] Ceremonies, held nine months to a year following disposal of the body, were sometimes performed. Hardisty (1872: 319) noted that bodies left in tree burials or scaffolds were sometimes burned and often a potlatch, or 'dance for the dead' (Krech 1987) was held in honour of the deceased by Gwich'in groups. Other Dene groups never held formal potlatches, though feasts, held within days of death, were common in the 20th century. Osgood (1933: 87) notes that in the late 1920s, Sahtuot'ine still singed their hair in association with a 'feast for the spirits'. Burials could occur anywhere and, as a result, the landscape is dotted with thousands of them, especially after the Christian mission period as they are visible, marked by picket fences. An elder from Colville Lake once told me that in 1928 family members who died because of an influenza epidemic were buried in the hearth of their houses near Crossley Lakes (Isadore Kochon, pers. comm., 1982). The hearth had melted the permafrost making it easier for the surviving family members to dig the graves. Though bodies are usually laid at full length, there is ethnographic evidence for flexed burials, with the body placed in a pit under the hearth of a tipi in a sitting position near Great Bear Lake in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Osgood 1933: 80) and among the Tłı̨chǫ Vital Thomas, a respected Tłı̨chǫ elder who collaborated for four decades with June Helm in ethnographic research, once explained the practice of flexed burials to her. Helm's editorial comments are in parentheses:

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[180] Likely a reference to Alaska as missionaries hadn't reached Canadian Gwich'in by this time.

[181] It has been reported that the fences also prevented dogs and other animals from disturbing the graves (Father Pochat-Cotilloux, pers. comm., 1999).

> [B]efore whitemen came, when the Indian buried people ... they got to find a good caribou skin with no holes. They soak it just a little, not too soft, just damp. And the body is sitting with the head down. (Vital illustrates, it is a tight, flexed burial with the knees drawn up.) They find a good woman sewer, the best sewer. They put the caribou skin over the body and sew it all up neatly. There are no holes. They stretch the hide as tight as they can, so the worms won't get in even after it is buried. No flies, ants, or anything can get in. They dig a hole and bury it like that. [182]

The process of burial eventually became subject to government legislation and control and since the 1960s (Hara 1980), burials have been permitted only in designated cemeteries under control of municipal authorities. Exceptions to this are rare, though in the mid-1980s the RCMP granted permission to a family to bury an elderly relative at Drum Lake in the Mackenzie Mountains.

Death and Grieving Today

Expecting death, as one might with a terminal illness or with extremely old age, allows families and the individual to prepare for it. The Dene perceive death as part of a natural rhythm, a part of the life cycle, and meet it with great dignity. Family and friends travel great distances to visit with someone on their deathbed to 'shake their hand'. Indeed, individuals sometimes announce their impending deaths so that friends can call to bid their goodbyes. A few years ago a Gwich'in elder was in hospital in Yellowknife for some tests and, diagnosed with a terminal illness, he had only a few weeks to live. I visited him in the hospital to 'shake his hand'—a formal opportunity to say goodbye. A day later I heard him on the local radio call-in program telling listeners that he was ill, not expected to live much longer, and wishing his friends and acquaintances happy times. No doubt it resulted in a long line of people visiting the hospital to visit with him. He soon returned home where he passed away in the company of his family.

People generally prefer to die at home, if possible, surrounded by friends and loved ones. As people gather to wait for death, men will hunt or fish as necessary to provide food for the larger group, and women will spend hours preparing it. The house is busy with comings and goings of dozens of people and the kitchen is a constant hubbub of activity with

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[182] From Helm, Fieldnotes, July 3, 1967, copy in the author's possession.

caribou meat boiling, fish roasting, bannock baking, and tea brewing. The closest family members, usually women, stay close to the bed of the dying, praying and offering support. Visitors come and go, talking quietly with the dying or a close relative. In the other rooms, elders, family members, and visitors gather to talk, laugh, pray, eat, tell stories, and await death. Children come and go as children do, playing quiet games, listening to stories, helping out when asked. Visitors stay in the house, sleeping when necessary in a corner, on a couch, or at a neighbour's house. In many ways, this practice is not dissimilar to that of small communities throughout Canada only a generation ago.

At death the room is vacated, and the closest same-gender relatives wash and dress the body for burial. If it is a former leader or powerful hunter, sometimes the men will gather drums and 'sing' the deceased's spirit to heaven. Sometimes the drumming begins hours before actual death so that the moment of death the spirit is carried instantly away on a song (cf. Ridington 1988). Many prayers are said and, where possible, the local priest is called to administer extreme unction. Men prepare a simple wooden coffin and if it's winter, young men are dispatched to start a large fire where the grave is to be dug to begin thawing the ground. If the community has a nurse or RCMP someone is dispatched to tell them, as one them or the priest must declare the death for legal purposes. The body is arranged in the coffin and close friends and visitors are allowed to visit to join in prayers. The next day (assuming there's no need to fly the body to the city for an autopsy), a church service is held followed soon by a second service at the graveside. The coffin is often carried by pallbearers from the church to the grave, with many men switching off as required, depending on the distance. Unlike cleansed graveside services common in large southern cities, where the polished coffin is lowered with mechanical aid and the grave spoil covered by a green carpet to prevent it from being seen, community burials are very pragmatic. The coffin is lowered on rope slings by hand and those in attendance help bury it immediately. On the day of the burial the deceased's possessions are gathered and burned. Those that can't be burned are left by the grave. The Tłı̨chǫ believe strongly that spirits have power to cause great harm and are attracted to their possessions and for this reason they are burned. After the burial the grave is abandoned for a year, the family comes to build the picket fence or to cover the grave with a layer of flat stones or similar decoration.

Today, feasts are commonly held throughout the Mackenzie Valley region a few days following a death, often on the day of burial. Feasts are attended by family, friends, and members of surrounding communities. Food, or money to purchase it, is often donated and local women take up much of the work in organizing and preparing the meal. Until recently,

it was custom for men to serve at feasts, with participants sitting on the floor, lined up either side of an oil cloth in long rows, though this practice is changing and participants are more usually fed buffet-style, sitting at tables. In recent years, there has been a minor resurgence of hair-cutting and a few younger men have chosen to cut their hair as a sign of their grief, typically to mark the loss of a beloved parent.

Children are told that it is important to remain quiet and calm and to not do anything rash as the behaviours one exhibits at the time of a death may stay with you for the rest of your life. A friend told me once that her son moved away soon after his sister's death leading his grandmother to note that as a result he would be moving for the rest of his life. The spirits of the recently dead are potentially dangerous and for this reason the Dene rarely use a person's name after they have died, for fear of attracting their spirit. Instead they will refer to a parent by their child's name, a practice known as teknonymy.

Spirits of the long-ago dead, the ancestors, live in other worlds or parts of the local environment, though a clear description of these is lacking in the literature. Asch (1988:29) reports that among the Slavey of Wrigley, a man's soul inhabits his fish lake, making visiting the lake dangerous for his immediate family. Consequently, the family abandons the lake. Fire is a medium for communicating with the spirits of ancestors and elders will often toss a small amount of food into the fire when it hisses or pops, the sound said to be an ancestor asking for food. In concert with the Christian calendar, Tłı̨chǫ elders will often make formal offerings of small pieces of food to the fire in their home woodstoves on Fridays. More formal feeding-the-fire ceremonies are often held Sundays or at important meetings or gatherings at other times of the week and serve as a way to honour the people who have gone before. At large events, an amount of food is prepared for each person in attendance—often a piece of bannock, buttered and spread with jam—and following a communal prayer, and elder puts the food in the fire. At smaller gatherings, each individual puts their own food in the fire, pausing for a moment to say a quiet prayer. Tobacco is another substance frequently offered at these times and, unlike other North American indigenous societies where tobacco is regarded as a sacred substance, here it is offered only in recognition of an ancestor's habit of smoking or chewing it. Drum prayers often accompany a feeding-the-fire ceremony. The antiquity of the ceremony is unknown, though it was known in early historic times and Osgood (1933) noted it at Great Bear Lake in the late 1920s and recounts a myth of 'long ago' that accounts for its origin. In the story Osgood recorded, a hunter kills a moose and is soon visited by the spirits of his dead brothers, killed in a war long ago, who ask for some food. As spirits or ghosts, he cannot see them and they

cannot take the meat. He drops some meat in the fire which the spirits ate, leading to the enduring practice (ibid: 82). Belief in reincarnation is still strong and young babies exhibiting physical or behavioural characteristics reminiscent of a recently deceased person may be regarded as the reincarnation of the deceased. Knowledge that someone has been reincarnated can also come through dreams.

In some places, more elaborate burial customs are practiced. Among the K'ashogot'ine of Fort Good Hope, for example, nonkinsmen hold the position of *sechéʔǫ* and were recruited to dig the grave and conduct the burial (Savishinsky and Hara 1981:320), while avoiding contact with the deceased's kin. In the early 1990s an elder described the duties of *sechéʔǫ* to me (Andrews, Fieldnotes, 1993):

> These men hold this position for 10 deaths but are then relieved of their duty as it is said that they might come to wish for death. While preparing to dig a grave, each man in the group cuts a short pole of 3 or 4 feet in length, which he sharpens at both ends. When walking through town they yell loudly throwing the pole in front of them to ward off illness and spirits attracted by the recent death. They are not allowed to sleep between the time of death and the burial, usually a period of 24 – 48 hours. When they sit they rest one end of the pole between their feet holding the stick upright. Should they begin to nod off the other point would prick their chin or face waking them. They build a fire to thaw the ground (if necessary), dig the grave working in shifts, lower the coffin, and fill in the grave. Following the burial the *sechéʔǫ* line-up and throw their walking sticks before them. The distance tells how long they will live. As *sechéʔǫ,* they are permitted to see their fate at only this time and at all other times must not try to see into the future. For example, this includes never looking at the top of a tree while cutting it, or gazing far into the distance at any other time, as both of these involve looking forward towards the future.

Large numbers of graves are scattered throughout the Northwest Territories, and when encountered by travellers, effort is made to clear them of vegetation, fix the picket fences if possible, offer a short prayer for the deceased, and leave a small gift, often tobacco for elders. While holding office, a Tłįchǫ chief has two appointed *kaowo,* 'foremen' or helpers, whose responsibility it is to organize events such as dances, fall hunts, hand games,

or death feasts. In 1992, I travelled with a former chief's *kaowo*, Nick Black, who told me it was among his duties to remember where graves were located and who was buried there. Travelling more than 200 kilometres by canoe that summer with Nick, we encountered over 100 graves, few of which he was not aware of. In some instances, graves had been washed away by a river and but this was seen as natural and generated no sense of loss. Though treated respectfully, the body holds little value after death, as the soul or spirit has departed it.

Sometimes, knowing that death was near, an elder would ask to be buried at a particular location. One elder, a woman who passed away in the 1940s, asked to be buried on a particular lake on the trail linking Great Bear and Great Slave lakes (Andrews, Fieldnotes, 1991). The location was chosen because both the summer and winter trails passed by the spot, meaning that people could stop and visit at anytime of the year. According to family oral tradition, she was a woman with strong *ɔ̨jk'ǫ̨ǫ̀*, and told her family that if they stopped to visit her and left her a gift, they could ask her for something. I visited her grave with family members twice over the years. The first time, Harry Simpson, who was travelling with us, left her a gift of tobacco and in return asked her for the gift of a moose. Just a few hours later, Harry shot a bull moose not far from her grave. The second time I visited, a moose was feeding on the vegetation growing inside her grave fence. Family members tell stories of similar encounters.

Whenever possible, graves fences are repaired or replaced regularly. A family will often make a special trip to visit the grave of an important ancestor, bringing a new picket fence to erect over the grave, and holding a feeding-the-fire ceremony to mark the event. Sometimes this requires chartering of an aircraft to reach a distant grave and a trip lasting several days. The old grave pickets are piled carefully nearby and often you can see evidence of multiple visits in the neat pile of old pickets.[183] Graves can also serve as message posts, especially when they are located at trail junctions. In these instances, a large tobacco tin is hung from a tree near the grave and used to leave messages or gifts—often packages of cigarettes—for whoever next comes along the trail. Sometimes relatively large cemeteries develop over time at significant camping locations. For example, cemeteries with 100 or

[183] On one of our cultural resource inventories, an elder from Gamètì asked us to carry new pickets for a relative's grave located a significant distance north of the community but on our route of travel. Of course, we agreed though the extra weight and bulk of the pickets, nails, and paint had to be carried over several portages.

more graves are often associated with seasonal contact-traditional villages (Helm and Damas 1963), at many locations in the Northwest Territories.

A Personal Narrative of Death and Grieving

Harry Simpson was born in 1934 to Johnny Inkfwe Simpson (1875-1942) and Monique Wekontsin (1895-1941). His parents passed away within a year of each other when Harry was less than 10 years old so he was adopted by a man named Wetade, who he called *ehtsèe*, or 'grandfather'. Harry married Elise Gon[184] and together they adopted 6 children (4 boys, 2 girls). Harry and Elise lived in Gamètì, where I first met them both in 1982.

In April, 2004, Harry was admitted to hospital in Yellowknife battling pneumonia. I visited him twice during his brief stay, the last time just two days before his death. We talked of our past travels together and our plans for future trips, both of us struggling to try to understand each other, he with his few words of English, and me with my few words of Tłı̨chǫ, most of them learned from Harry during our canoe trips together. Early Sunday morning, the phone rang and John B. Zoe, our friend and partner in the trails research, relayed the sad news of his death, asking me to go to the hospital to await the arrival of his family and community leaders. Over the next few days I was invited to participate in my grief as a family member, helping at the hospital and the funeral. Over the next few days I wrote the following in my fieldnotes and present it here in abridged and emended form:

> Harry Simpson, of Gamètì, passed away today, 24 April 2007, in Yellowknife at the age of 76. A former sub-chief of the Gamètì Dene Band, board member serving for many years on Gamètì's local education authority, collaborator with the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre on numerous heritage projects, teacher at the Tundra Science Camp for over a decade, and key elder advisor to the Tłı̨chǫ Government during land claim negotiations, his knowledge, experience and wisdom were always readily shared. Through his willingness to instruct others in the way of his culture he was widely recognized as an important teacher and cultural ambassador.
>
> A sad and emotional day marking the end of life for one of my greatest friends and mentors, Harry Simpson, who passed away this morning at 4:00am from complications related to pneumonia and diabetes. John B. Zoe called me this

[184] Elise Simpson predeceased Harry, passing away in 2002.

morning at 7:10am to report that Harry had passed away, at Yellowknife's Stanton Hospital, a few hours earlier. John's call came as a terrible shock as I had visited Harry just a few days before on Friday when I was told that he was expected to recover completely. I left immediately for the hospital and, finding no one else there, went to his room where the duty nurse allowed me to visit him. Harry's jaw had been tied closed and his feet together. He was covered, to his shoulders, with a sheet. He looked as though he was asleep and I touched him gently to make sure he wasn't. I spent several minutes alone with him but could only muster a tearful *massicho*, this to a man who had meant so much to me.

After spending about 30 minutes with Harry I returned to the lobby to wait for others to arrive and his son, Raymond, arrived within minutes. I introduced myself to Raymond and described my long relationship with Harry. Tearfully, he told me how Harry had taught him all he knew about life in the bush, a story very similar to my own and one, which we soon realized, we shared. Over the next few hours family, friends and acquaintances began to arrive. Later, nurses insisted that all visiting his room wear masks, gowns, and gloves, as there was a threat of TB infection.

Later in the morning his sons invited me to help prepare him for burial. This involved removing his clothes, washing him carefully with warm soapy water, re-tying his jaw in a closed position, and carefully binding his feet to a 'standing position'. The men took particular care with this last responsibility and it seemed as though they were preparing Harry to stand before his maker.

Leaving him in the hospital, we then went to purchase him a suit for his funeral. John B. Zoe had arrived by this time and was able to put the suit on the Tłı̨chǫ Government account. The local undertaker was called and met us at the men's store and Harry's sons picked out a coffin and made arrangements for removal of the body and transfer to Gamètì. We all shook hands and went our separate ways at that point, leaving the final preparation and transportation of the body to Gamètì to the undertaker.

28 April 2007 Gamètì, NWT: The Tlicho Government arranged for a charter with Sahtu Air and invited me to join it for the flight to Gamètì. The weather was very poor: low, overcast ceiling, fog, and snow. We learned later that the flight carrying the Premier Joe Handley and MLA Jackson Lafferty were turned back because of it, meaning that the 300 pieces of Kentucky Fried Chicken they were

carrying for the feast never made it. Because the weather was so bad, the pilot flew for most of the way at tree-top level and despite the fact that all of us were tense knowing that there was little distance between us and the ground for managing any misfortune that might befall us, I felt Harry's presence somehow, knowing that he was watching over us. We were so low that I joked with another passenger that had I been able to open the window I could have made a pinecone collection. The combination of weather and flight altitude made for a surreal, grey landscape over which we seemed to skim as though in a winter sled. We were fortunate to see a few caribou and wolves from our low vantage point and many recognizable landmarks, which brought comfort to all. As we neared Gamètì our flight path took us over *ʔɻdaàtɻ̀li*, the Idaa trail, and as I recognized each place Harry had introduced us to so many years before my eyes filled with tears and my heart with the pain of missing him. We arrived in Gamètì and a number of trucks were available to transport us to town: the community kept up a constant conveyor of pick-up trucks and vans to and from the airport picking up the steady stream of visitors arriving in numerous charters and scheduled flights.

All were gathered at one of Harry's son's houses in the centre of town where food and tea was available to anyone. I met with Harry's son, giving him about a dozen 8x10 colour prints of Harry hunting or working along the trail that I had taken over the years and recently printed as a gift for the family. I also met his other children. Later, I was warned by a family friend that the family wanted me to speak at the service so I spent the next 30 minutes composing my speech though being so distracted with grief it was not an easy task.

The bells for the church service began tolling at about 2:30pm, and by 3:00 the community had assembled Fred Mantla, former chief, lead the service. The priest, John Bekale, Rosa Mantla and others all spoke. It came time for John B and I to speak. John asked me to go first and I cannot really remember the details of what I said except that I noted when Harry and I first met, summarized the work we had done together, how well he taught me, and how important education was to him. To be honest, I was barely able to hold myself together for the speech. I stepped down and John very kindly summarized my words in Tłı̨chǫ before giving his own speech. Near the end of the service the coffin, which was located near the alter in the back of the church, was opened and the parishioners filed past to say their final

words to Harry. I was struck by the older women who all stopped sometimes for several minutes, touched him, and then in a loud voice so that all could hear, talked to him in Tłı̨chǫ.

Coming out of the church, Harry's niece stopped me, offered her hand, and asked when I was going to write a book cataloguing all that Harry had taught me. A prophetic request, perhaps, given that I am currently doing just this in the form of my PhD thesis. She asked me to make sure I included something about his death and funeral so that others could see how respected he was. I promised to include it.

The procession to the cemetery, about 700 metres away, began following the church service. His oldest son led the way with the staff and cross, and all the men of the community took turns as pallbearers. I took a turn as well and am grateful to the community for letting me participate in a meaningful way. All others trailed along behind. At the grave a large hole had already been dug and the coffin was immediately lowered in. A large plywood box was then lowered over the coffin and several layers of 6mil polypropylene were laid over this.[185] Several speeches and a religious service took place. Among those who spoke were George Mackenzie (Grand Chief), Charlie Neyelly (an elder and prophet from Dèlı̨ne) and many others, the graveside service taking more than an hour. While we were at the grave, a few hundred feet away in a large clearing, a group of women had gathered to burn Harry's possessions and on a large, roaring bonfire were throwing his mattress, bedding, and clothing: All the objects that he was intimate with. At the end of the graveside service several youth handed out flowers to throw on the coffin and we each threw a handful of dirt as well. The men then shared a shovel taking turns filling in the grave. Again I was invited to help, which I did.

The pilot was anxious to leave for the return flight to Yellowknife before the weather worsened so we were asked to leave immediately following the graveside service, missing the feast which was scheduled to follow soon after. The hour-long flight home gave another opportunity for focused reflection on the impact Harry has had on my life, as will the days and weeks ahead.

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[185] This is the modern version of the caribou skin covering that Vital Thomas told June Helm about.

Discussion

As Adam (2006: 119; emphasis original) has noted "the relationship to time is at the very root of what makes us human. All that we recognize as culture arises with and from efforts to *transcend* the key delimitations of human existence: death, change and the rhythmicity of the physical environment." Yet, as Munn (1992; cf. Adam 1994) notes, the field of time studies in anthropology was largely undeveloped until the 1970s, and then only in a cursory fashion. Since the 1970s, theoretical consideration of time has become more common though, aside from Gell's (1992) focused work, it tends to be linked to the "somewhat hazy notion of time as 'flow', or 'flux'" (Hodges 2008). Adam (1994: 505) has commented on the pervading influence that Western concepts of time have had on anthropological studies noting, however, that "we cannot understand the approaches to time of people of other cultures without drawing on our understanding," observing—as numerous others have also noted—reflexivity is an unavoidable limitation to anthropological inquiry and accumulation of knowledge. Thus, with this caveat, I attempt to outline some basic parameters of Dene perception of time. To date, almost nothing has been written about Dene concepts of time and temporality, so there is little other ethnography to draw upon. I suggest, here, that among other means of gauging time, such as those linked to cyclical change of environment, perception of time for the Dene is embodied in grieving and that the embodiment of time and other rituals related to death are linked to a broader system of reciprocity through which the Tłı̨chǫ manage the ephemerality of life in a difficult environment. In this way, the present exists in the lived body, the future comes into view with forward movement, and the past is carried as a remembrance, embodied in the materiality of hair.

In Athapaskan studies, anthropologists have commented generally on two divisions of time recognized in Dene history, often referred to as old and new worlds,[186] an accounting for the transition from an era of chaos to one of order, where rules linked to general reciprocity allowed all human and animal-persons to live in relative security. In daily life, expressions of time and temporality are often associated with the cycle of the season. Words for day and night, month, season, and year are numerous, many linked to specific cyclical phenomena such as migrations of caribou or waterfowl, fish runs, freeze-up and break-up, or seasonal weather patterns. For example, the Tłı̨chǫ word for March is *Det'ǫ̀cho Zaà*, 'eagle's month,' marking the time of year when Bald eagles return north after wintering

[186] This was also addressed to some extent in chapter 3.

further south. The month of May is known as *Tǫts'ì Zaà*, where *tǫts'ì* refers to the time of year when ice still covers the lakes but the snow has melted from the land, a time for making birchbark canoes as travel over the lake ice will soon become very dangerous. The lunar cycle, the position of the sun, and the orientation of the Big Dipper (*nǫ̀nda*) were all used to reckon time (George Blondin, pers. comm. 1990). The word for moon, *sa*, is now commonly translated as 'month,' reflecting the impact of Western concepts of time on Tłı̨chǫ perceptions. Other historical influences include the fur trade, reflected in the name for November, *Ehdzo Nìzee Zaà*, or 'trapping time,' and the church, as represented in the name for Friday, *Łiwedaidzeè*, the 'day for eating fish'. The word for heart, *sadzeè*, is also used today for clock time, hour, or watch. References to temporality exist in Dene folklore, as well, though a thorough cataloguing of these occurrences is well beyond the scope of this chapter. In one example, however, the wolverine, who is regarded as having powerful *ɔı̨k'ǫǫ̀*, can fold the earth in order to travel vast distances in time impossible for humans or animal-persons (George Blondin, pers. com. 1990). Travel was also used to reckon time in other ways. Travel between locations was often measured in 'days,' reflecting the amount of time needed to traverse the distance. During the days when dog team travel was still prevalent, the fur trade practice of measuring time and distance in 'pipes' was common. A pipe is the time between stops so that the driver could enjoy a pipe of tobacco, while resting the dogs (see Osgood 1953 for a description). Today, the amount of gasoline remaining in a boat or snow machine fuel tank can be expressed as an amalgam of time/distance, in the number of hours of running time. Landscape and temporality are metaphorically linked with the word *ı̨daà*, meaning 'future' or 'ahead', used in the name of a central trail—*ɔı̨daàtı̨li*—from which access to almost all other Tłı̨chǫ trails is gained.[187]

Grief is also linked to temporality. For the Tłı̨chǫ and other Dene, grief is a way of apprehending the world, of marking the passage of time, and of signifying the importance and role of family. It is also part of a broader system of reciprocity, where security is mediated through the gift of knowledge and power. Grief is palpable, it is embodied, and is strongly associated with the passage of time. However, in Tłı̨chǫ practice, time is also embodied and reflected in body position, where the past is behind, the present is the lived body, and the future is in front. By embodying time, the Tłı̨chǫ are able to transcend death.

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[187] The role of *ɔı̨daàtı̨li* was addressed in chapter 2 and other locations.

The embodiment of time is reflected in numerous cultural practices associated with death and grieving, but also with other aspects for life.

For example, in the Tłı̨chǫ story of *Kwo degootso* (red-breasted merganser) and *Nǫ̀htà* (horned grebe), to mediate their grief *Tatsǫ̀* (Raven) tells them "if you cut your hair you'll forget the past, because it is behind you," reflecting that the past is both metaphorically and physically in a position behind a lived body. In this way, the past is not only embodied, but it is tangible and visible in the materiality of hair. The story also suggests that long, black hair was valued, recognized as a sign of beauty, and strongly associated with perceptions of identity (cf. Slobodin 1981b). Cutting of hair is strongly associated with grieving and as the historical record shows, was widely practiced among Northern Athapaskans.[188] In this way, hair was associated with remembrance. In another example, recorded by John Franklin, hair is used as a remembrance of the living. Encountering a Slavey or Tłı̨chǫ man on the Mackenzie River in 1825, Franklin engaged him as a guide, requiring him to leave immediately with his party. In preparing to leave, Franklin (1828: 233) described the following ceremony, underscoring the link between hair and remembrance:

> Previous to his departure a ceremony took place, of which I could not learn the meaning; he cut off a lock of his hair, and having divided it into three parts, he fastened one of them to the hair on the upper part of his wife's head, blowing on it three times with the utmost violence in his power, and uttering certain words. The other two he fastened with the same formalities, on the heads of his two children.[189]

The future is associated with sight and the view forward, and in this way is linked strongly to mobility and the daily practice of travel. When travelling with a group of Tłı̨chǫ, each morning an elder will lead the group in a prayer, asking everyone to face the direction of the day's travel. This practice has persisted for at least several generations as both Russell (1898) and Wheeler (1914b) made similar observations. The future is also palpable,

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[188] Slobodin (1981b) reports that it was also cut at puberty, perhaps another instance where the past, in this case of childhood, was to be left behind.

[189] This is reminiscent in some ways of the Victorian practice of making hair jewelry to remember a loved one after death (Lutz 2011). Today, in the field of forensic medical or environmental toxicology, chemical analysis of hair can reveal characteristic aspects of an individual's home environment, converging somewhat with the Dene idea that hair holds the past.

but only in dreams where powerful ʔɻkʼǫǫ̀ can be used to travel forward, to visit and see what lies ahead.[190] The future, otherwise unknown, can be a source of potential danger and individuals must guard themselves from seeing it without the protection of ʔɻkʼǫǫ̀. The practices of the *sechéʔǫ*, who are only allowed to 'see their fate' during their tenure as gravediggers, and must otherwise guard themselves from 'looking towards the future' by controlling their gaze at other times. In another example, once, while we were examining the puberty drinking tube in the *De T'a Hoti Ts'eeda: We Live Securely from the Land* exhibit (Andrews 2006), a Tłɻchǫ elder told me that at first menses young girls would be required to wear a fringe to obscure their vision, so that they wouldn't "see the future" (Andrews, Fieldnotes, 2006).

In Dene worldview, one must carry forward in a respectful way at all times. By embodying lessons from the past and resisting the desire to see the future,[191] Dene make their way through an unpredictable world safely and securely. The discussion here has attempted, briefly, to describe aspects of the Dene concept of time as a component of their theory of history, where the past (*ɻdii*), through the materiality of hair, and present (*dìi*) are embodied in the lived body and where the future (*ɻdaà*) is encountered through forward movement. Grieving is also an aspect of respect and through the gift of cutting of hair, the loss of a loved one is transcended. Clearly, ethnographic data are lacking and the analysis here is incomplete, yet, it is hoped that the discussion has provided impetus for further research into the subject.

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[190] This was discussed to some extent in chapter 3.

[191] Except at appropriate times, such as at sites where geomantic rituals permit a future gaze or through dream travel.

Chapter 8: *Tegumentum*: Composing Ethnographic Landscapes

Introduction

Objects and the relationships between them are at the core of archaeological interpretation but only rarely have archaeologists attended to the subjective qualities of an object's materiality and their own relationships to them. The subjective quality of engaging with objects has been dictated in archaeological practice by the overwhelming dominance of the methods of scientific inquiry, prescribing how the relationships between people and material things are interpreted (cf. Tilley, Hamilton, and Bender 2000:40). Recently, largely through the influence of post-processualism, [192] artists and archaeologists have engaged in collaborative visual thinking, using their respective creative practices to generate new ways to interpret and present diverse archaeologies. This chapter explores one such collaboration, called *Tegumentum*, where artist-printer Paul Liam Harrison and the author, an archaeologist-photographer, attempted to find new ways of visualizing archaeological and ethnographic landscapes by digitally deconstructing field photographs and recombining them through the medium of screenprinting. As an example of interdisciplinarity where, in this case, the creative methods and techniques of an artist-printer were used to manipulate the creative products of an archaeologist-photographer, provided an opportunity for a visual dialogue where new visual narratives were created.

Art:Archaeology:Art:Anthropology:Art

In the history of anthropology and archaeology, 'art' has predominantly involved only the study of ancient or indigenous art forms and only rarely was the artist's lens turned on the practice itself. More recently, visual thinking has had a remarkable impact on the academy and archaeologists and anthropologists, in collaboration with artists, have interrogated their own forms of creative presentation to explore different ways of interpreting their practice. Indeed, the field of anthropology is in the midst of a visual

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[192] Interpretive or post-processual archaeology is a movement in archaeological theory that emphasizes the subjectivity of archaeological interpretations. It originated in the UK in the late 1970s led by archaeologists Ian Hodder, Daniel Miller, Christopher Tilley and Peter Ucko, who were influenced by efforts to combine French Marxist anthropology with Structuralism, post-modernism, and a new cultural anthropology reflected in both North American and British social anthropology (Trigger 2006). Post-processual archaeology developed in the United States in the 1980s with emphasis on marginalized archaeologies, focusing on issues of ethnic prejudice (cf. Nicholas and Andrews 1997) and gender bias in archaeological interpretation, among other subjects.

revolution of sorts. Through visual ethnography, social or cultural anthropologists use photography, video, and electronic media as cultural texts to explore social interaction and individual experience within the ethnographic settings they are enmeshed in (see, for instance, Anderson and Campbell 2009; Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005; Ingold 2007; Okely 2001; Pink 2008; Schneider 2008). Collaborative efforts with artists provide yet other ways of interpreting the realities of social structure, economy, and politics (Marcus 2010). Through visual thinking and collaborative efforts with artists, archaeologists are developing new methodological and analytical tools, as well, allowing a re-examination of the visual aspects of their work, while presenting opportunities to engage with new visual practices. Arising largely out of interpretive or post-processual archaeologies, archaeologists have begun to reflect on how archaeological knowledge is constructed through different modes of representation (see, for instance, Lovata 2008; Moser 2001; Renfrew, 2003; Renfrew, Gosden and DeMarrais 2004; Smiles and Moser, 2004; Tilley, Hamilton and Bender 2000). As Lovata (2008: 101) has noted:

> Archaeologists find art significant because of its role in both their presentation and their understanding of the past. Art serves to unify disparate and fragmentary evidence into a reconstructed whole while the artistic process serves as a parallel to, or guide for, engaging with prehistory. Consequently, the number of archaeologists studying contemporary art has steadily increased over the last decade.

Archaeologists, anthropologists, and artists have recently engaged in collaborative dialogues to explore aspects of the visual intersection of their creative practices in diverse ways, and objects—at a variety of scales—serve as inspiration for most of these collaborations. For instance, exhibits and installations in museums have been used to explore the tensions between contemporary art and ethnographic objects (Andrews 2006) or to articulate "emergent changes in fieldwork practices in anthropology" (Marcus 2010). Landscape archaeologists have incorporated aspects of archaeological landscapes in environmental art in order to 're-present' their practical engagement with archaeological sites and to seek new ways of 'understanding' them and 'telling' about them (Tilley, Hamilton, and Bender 2000). Artists and archaeologists have tried to 're-construct the past' by replicating ancient technologies and then using the experience to guide recreation of visual narratives of past ways through painting (Lovata 2008). Some artists have adopted the techniques of archaeology to explore aspects of their own visual creativity. In his *Dig*

projects (*Tate Thames Dig 1999* and *New England Digs 2001*), American artist Mark Dion employed the performative aspects of archaeological fieldwork (excavation, collection, cataloguing, laboratory analysis, display) as 'objects' to critique the classificatory systems of modern society while raising questions about the boundaries of art and science (Vilches 2004).

Post-processualism has allowed archaeology to expand its frame of study from the past to the present, letting contemporary archaeology take modern society as its 'field,' bringing diverse issues such as visual politics (Frederick 2009), conflict (Schofield 2006), and design and workmanship of modern material culture (Shanks and Tilley 1992) into the archaeologist's gaze, while providing new ways to collaborate with artists (Schofield 2006). In the hope of prompting archaeologists to confront their conventional interactions with visual media, archaeologist Sara Perry (2009) turns the gaze inward and "influenced by the work of various playwrights, artists, anthropologists, cultural theorists, and archaeologists," undertakes to critique the use of "orthodox modes of [visual] engagement" by manipulating examples of illustrative material published in archaeological texts.

Significantly, these debates and experiments are continuing with much interest and vigour. In 2010 and 2011, there were/are no less than six international conferences, conference sessions, or exhibitions dedicated to exploring visual dialogues in archaeology. In September, 2010, the European Association of Archaeologists hosted the session "Objects and images in the history of archaeology" with discussions on 'visual grammar of ruins, painting on pottery, and the role of graphic media in academic archaeology (European Association of Archaeologists, 2010). In December 2010, the Du Mois Gallery in New Orleans hosted *Ethnographic Terminalia*, an exhibit featuring the works of 29 artists and anthropologists with the goal of investigating practical and disciplinary boundaries between contemporary art practices and forms of anthropological inquiry and expression (AAA 2010). The same month, the University of Bristol hosted the Theoretical Archaeology Group annual meeting which included a session entitled "An artful integration? Possible futures for archaeology and creative work" (TAG Bristol 2010). In April, 2011, the University of Southhampton hosted the "Visualisation in Archaeology International Conference," the concluding event of an ambitious three-year project that focused on visual communication in archaeology by providing research 'space'—in the form of collaborations, conferences, exhibits, art projects—to 're-think' boundaries of images and their production and use in the discipline (VIA 2011). In May 2011, at the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) conference at University of California, Berkeley, a session entitled "Opening Dialogues in Archaeological

Photography" (TAG Berkeley 2011) explored the intersection of art and archaeological photography in diverse ways. The session's eleven papers covered topics on nostalgia and history in archaeological photography, how photography as a mode of practice-based research is used as tool for archaeological thinking, practical and ethical issues related to documentation and representation, as well as exhibit oriented presentations focused on the photography of excavation, landscape, and objects. One paper, by Ruth Tringham, discussed 'mashups', the practice of layering components of historical and modern photographs of archaeological excavations and place to create new landscapes. Tringham's work is inspired in part by Russian photoartist, Sergey Larenkov, who overlays components of historical photographs—streetscapes, disasters, battle scenes, figures in historical dress—on modern images of the same location, 'mashing' time and place (Larenkov, 2011).

The forthcoming American Anthropological Association (AAA) annual meetings in Montreal, Canada in November, 2011 will host a session entitled "Traces of the image: A roundtable discussion on visual ethics." Sponsored by the Society for Visual Anthropology, a chapter of the AAA, the session will be organized as a roundtable discussion to explore ethical themes related to use and representation of images in anthropology. Anthropology has long debated issues of authenticity, appropriation, intellectual property rights and whether artists from one culture can ethically employ styles, stories, motifs and other artistic content from other cultures (see, for instance, Young 2006).

These continuing efforts at collaboration are an indication of the importance that visual representation has in archaeological practice and how archaeologists are actively engaged in visual thinking about new ways to express them. As the results of these recent conferences are published in the coming years, the growing body of literature and visual dialogue will serve to stimulate a new generation of artists and archaeologists to explore the nexus of their creative efforts.

The Archaeological Photograph

Photographs are perhaps the most ubiquitous of objects created almost exclusively for remembering (Edwards 2009). Subjects as diverse as a family portrait, a photograph of a childhood pet, a favourite landscape, a local disaster, an artefact recently revealed through excavation, an x-ray of a broken bone, or a festive celebration, all facilitate remembrances of some sort. As visual memories, they can also invoke olafactic, haptic, and aural remembrances—the smell of a wet dog, the brisk cold of a winter's morning, the complex vocalization of a raven—and as such serve as sources of textured layers of sensory

remembering. As Edwards (2009: 332) notes “in photographs we see fragments of space and time reproduced to infinity”. Photographs are part of the material culture of archaeological practice and as a technique of investigation photography provides both an outlet for artistic expression but also links to remembering the people, place, and events. In their materiality, they serve to bring moments from the past into the future and because of their emotive quality they offer tremendous potential for artistic exploration.

Objects are not only a subject of study in archaeology, they are also at the core of archaeological presentation in the form of text, illustration, photograph, and museum exhibit, among other media. As products of a creative enterprise they can be sources of emotional connection to both the practice and its past. One only need think the personal connection that anthropologists and archaeologists have to their fieldnotes (Sanjek 1990), or artists to their sketchbooks (Gunn 2009), to understand the evocative properties that a creation of practice-led research can hold. Field photographs are another creative product that evokes strong emotional responses in that they fuse the view of the photographer, a moment in time, and the image referents in the materiality of the photograph itself (Edwards 2009; Parno 2010). In this way, field photographs serve both as a record—a source of knowledge on which to base interpretations, reflecting their role in the science-related aspects of the practice—and also a source of emotive remembrances, reflecting the expressive and creative aspects of the practice of the archaeologist-photographer. Taking a photograph is a conscious act, satisfying the need to capture a particular view. While the accumulation of artefacts, sites, measurements, charts, fieldnotes, reports, and published articles help to mark an archaeologist’s career, photographs define it visually, cataloguing the experience of sight, freezing moments of view, and preserving a fragment of the relationship between the archaeologist-photographer and the image referents. Thus, though the photographer is rarely among the image referents, he is nonetheless reflected in every image and photographs constitute a visual ethnography of his practice.

Today, more than any other time in our history, photographs are ubiquitous in our culture, appearing everywhere we look, creating visual overload as they crowd for our view. Regardless, as objects they still evoke memory. Archival photographs, an old album of family photographs or a binder of 35mm slides from an archaeological dig, catalogue our collective past. As Elizabeth Edwards (2009:332) has commented “photographs express a desire for memory and the act of keeping a photograph is, like other souvenirs, an act of faith in the future”. Yet, for the viewer, photographs elicit a need for explanation, an understanding of the photographer’s intent and, as Susan Sontag (2003:10) observes, “all photographs wait to

be explained or falsified by their captions". Thus, photographs are agents of memory and explanation that, in their materiality, seek to corroborate our need to understand the past and its effect on the present.

The Screenprint

The art of screenprinting is a venerable practice, essentially a form of stencil printing, finding its roots in the history of silk decoration in ancient China (Sheng 1999). It did not appear in Europe until the late 18th century and was not widespread until the early 20th when it began to be used extensively. During the Depression in North America, the United States government implemented the Works Progress Adminstration (WPA) in 1935, a program to create employment. As an aspect of the WPA, the Federal Arts Project engaged numerous artists to create a myriad of prints and murals to adorn public buildings. Some of these young artists went on to have illustrious careers and Jackson Pollack and Willem de Kooning are two prime examples. Of the screenprinters, Ben Shahn became the best known and was the first artist to use silkscreens extensively, helping to bring what until then had been a largely commercial and industrial decorative and illustrative practice into the realm of modern contemporary art (Castleman 1988:124-5). As a methodical practice of layering shapes and colour over time, it provides contemplative space allowing creative dialogue and collaboration to develop through the process of making. For example, beginning in 1962, American artist Robert Rauschenberg (1925 – 2008) began experimenting with what he called 'combines,' incorporating into his paintings both objects—often garbage found on the streets of New York—with photographs, which he applied to the canvas through screenprinting, creating new, complex narratives. A contemporary of Rauschenberg, London-born Richard Hamilton (b. 1922), used screenprinting to critical acclaim in the 1960s, such as in his 1965 "My Marilyn," a screenprint from 9 stencils. These artists helped define the Pop Art movement of the 1960s which, in turn, helped to make screenprinting an important technique for artistic expression. Today, screenprinting remains in wide commercial use and continues as a popular method of image making for artists and designers, finding renewed potential in its compatibility with new digital technologies. As well, since many forms of printmaking are accessible and inexpensive, it has stimulated wide interest in creative expression among students and the public at large.

Artist-printers have also recently engaged in interdisciplinary visual collaborations with scientists which are exploring "the mechanical phenomena which are profoundly associated with Life, and inseparable from our understanding of Growth and Form"

(Thompson 1992 [1917]:5). Artist-printer Dr. Paul Liam Harrison, currently appointed as research assistant/fellow and PhD Researcher at the University of Dundee, Visual Research Centre (VRC), agreed to collaborate on *Tegumentum*. His interest and experience in print, printmaking, and publishing provide him with an artistic and technical background through which he explores new and emerging technologies through traditional print methods. Dr. Harrison's extensive experience in art-science collaboration, most recently through the critically acclaimed "Designs for Life" project (Harrison 2009) offered a methodology and a major body of work that served to lead our own project.

Tegumentum

Tegumentum, Latin for 'covering' or 'skin,' provides the bridging metaphor for the subjects under exploration in our printmaking collaboration. We used photographs related to the Tłı̨chǫ Birchbark Canoe and Caribou-skin Lodge projects[193] in our creative collaboration: Both caribou-skin and birchbark are important 'coverings' in the historical and cultural landscapes of the Tłı̨chǫ. Our collaboration employed concepts and practices from visual ethnography, archaeology, and printmaking and applied them to the study of memory, place, and everyday life through a collaborative process of image-making. Through the collaboration of an artist-printer and an archaeologist-photographer, we attempted to find different ways to layer visual information in order to create new ways of visualizing archaeological and ethnographic landscapes of the Tłı̨chǫ. To do so, we took the photographic products of archaeological and ethnographic research, deconstructed them digitally using Microsoft Photoshop, recombined shapes and colours, then reconstructed them as screenprints to create new ways to visualize the archaeology, history, manufacture, and use of Tłı̨chǫ birchbark canoes and caribou-skin lodges (see Figures 37 and 38). Printmaking integrates creative expression with skilled workmanship and technical knowledge to communicate vital aesthetic experiences through artistic production. Through a collaborative process of combining photographic, digital, and autographic techniques on the same surface, our collaboration develops new relationships and narratives. As Dr. Harrison (2009:8) has noted:

> Screenprinting is an ideal medium for facilitating this synthesis of diverse technologies and is also an ideal vehicle for collaboration. The process is methodical, yet offers infinite variation and potential for experimentation.

[193] See Chapters 4, 5, and 6 for material related to these projects. See also Andrews and Zoe (1998).

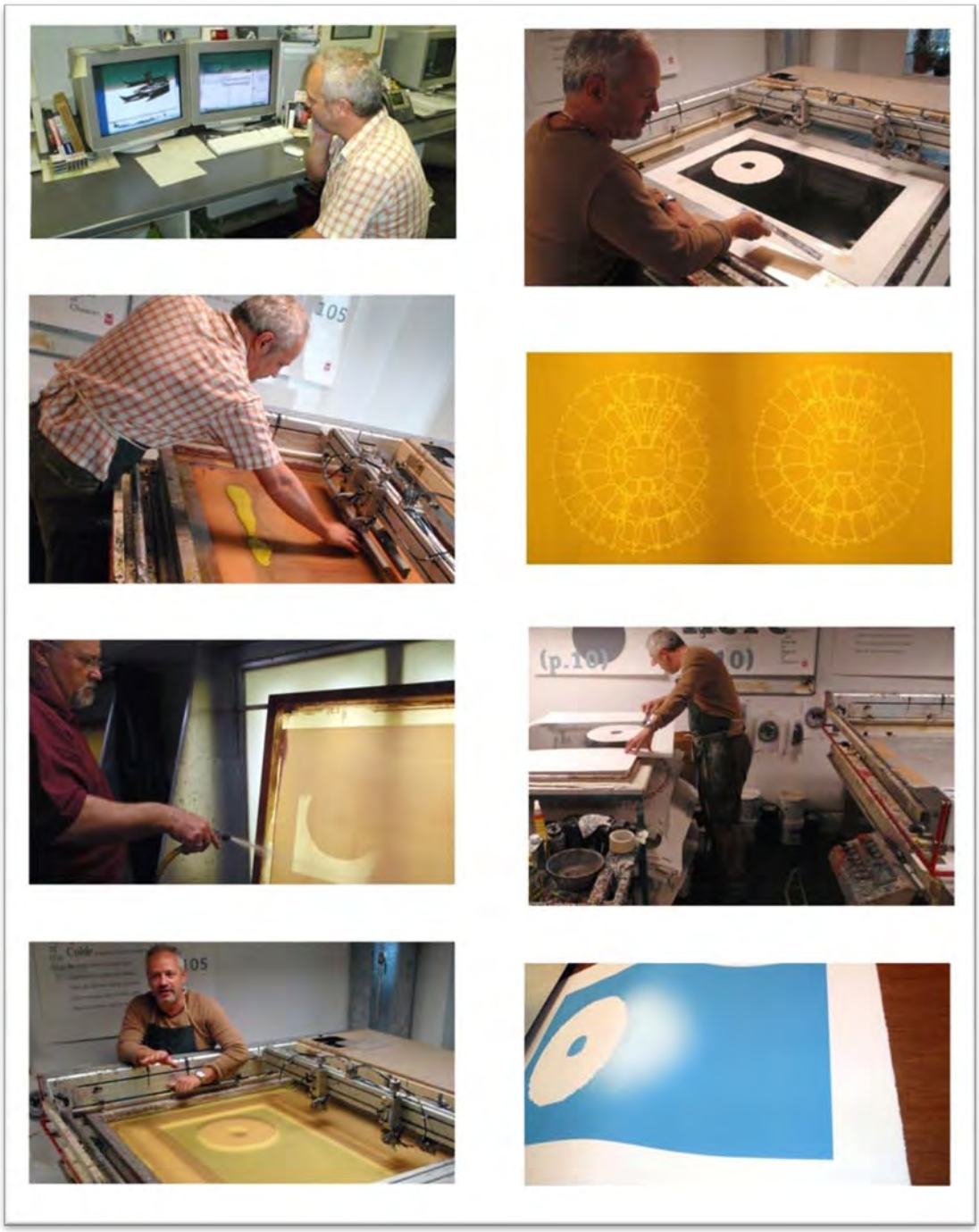

Figure 37: Process.

Figure 38: Colour.

> Working with multiples allows room for sketches to be made and tested and for new directions to be taken in response to new thoughts and visual findings; each stage simultaneously adding and deleting, revealing and veiling. The process of layering, inherent in printmaking, dictates certain time constraints, but it is these distinct stages that provide time for reflection, discussion and negotiation on the subsequent action, making each work a truly joint production.

Tegumentum was also an experiment in practice-led collaboration as both of us brought our own expertise to the project, using it to guide our participation and contributions in the design and production of the final prints. In the process, we have also learned something of each other's practice. Twelve photographs were used to create the visual montages, each carrying a multiplicity of remembrances. As an example of the layers of memory and multitude of connections the photographs carry, four will be analysed. By examining their origin, the scenes they visualize, or objects or people within them, aspects of the practice of the archaeologist-photographer can be explored.

Ruler:

A simple plastic ruler (Figure 39) that unfolds in four sections to mark a metre's length has been part of my toolkit for decades. I have two identical copies of the yellow ruler visible in this photograph that I carry with me at all times when travelling in the field. As my photographs are documents, capturing my field observations for later contemplation, I almost always include one of these rulers in the scene to mark both scale and a north-south orientation. Of all the 'objects' of my practice, this one has been photographed more often than any other and consequently has become to be something of a signature, marking a photograph as my own. Over the years, the rulers have become familiar and valued possessions that are never far from hand, whether in the field, in my office—where they often sitting visibly on a nearby shelf—or tucked safely in one of the packing crates that we use to transport things to and from the field. It has become a symbol of both my practice and its setting, carrying with it many memories of moments of its use. In the photograph chosen, the ruler is providing scale for a fragment of birchbark from a canoe discovered at an archaeological site on *ʔɻdaàtɟli*. Finding painted birchbark is rare as canoes were generally only used for one season and then discarded. Sometimes, as Mason (1946:27)

notes, they were decorated with red ochre: “a man would paint the manifestation of his medicine on the outside of the bow of his canoe so that the canoe might see where to go and not upset”. Construction of birchbark canoes mostly ended before the Second World War, when cedar and canvas canoes became widely available at fur trade posts. It appears that this canoe has been painted twice, suggesting that it comes from a time when canoes were in transition and an old birchbark canoe might have been kept for a few years from nostalgia. Painting it—first blue, then green—might have been an attempt to prolong its life. Regardless, the manifestation of the maker’s ʔi̱kʼǫ̨̀ is still visible in the traces of red ochre visible in the lower right portion of the bark.

Film: 35mm Fuji ISO 100. 1994. Digitized with a Nikon 4000 ED Film Scanner. Digital image resized using Microsoft Photoshop to 8 x 10, 300dpi and adjusted for colour, contrast, and light level.

Figure 39: Ruler.

His father's canoe:

Too dark for exhibition in other contexts this photograph, chosen precisely because of its dark colours and the play between the positive and negative aspects of light, holds much significance for me (Figure 40). Two men gaze at the remains of a birchbark canoe sitting in a copse of bush and trees near the shore of a lake; the overhanging trees block the full sun, providing a dark and dappled scene. One of the men, the older one, is smoking a cigarette, illuminated by a beam of sunlight. Both seem reverently interested in the canoe. This photograph marks a significant moment in another collaborative research project undertaken between 1990 and 1994 in partnership with Harry Simpson, a Tłı̨chǫ elder from Gamètì, and John B. Zoe (the other person in the image), a Tłı̨chǫ historian and researcher. Together, in partnership with a variety of others, we undertook archaeological and cultural resource survey of two ancient birchbark canoe trails, *ʔı̨daàtı̨li* and *Hozìideè*,[194] where we recorded and documented over 480 archaeological sites. At this site we located the remains of a canoe that Harry that rode in as a toddler. Though he had no memory of the site or the canoe, his older sister told us the story and was able to provide directions as to where the canoe might be found. The canoe, built by Harry's father, was abandoned here in 1932. For Harry, the moment was quite touching, as he was able to reflect back to his youth and time spent with his parents, both of whom passed away before he became a teenager. For me it was yet another opportunity to experience firsthand how archaeology could be informed by Tłı̨chǫ oral tradition and cultural practice.

Film: 35mm Fuji ISO 100. 1991. Digitized with a Nikon 4000 ED Film Scanner. Digital image resized using Microsoft Photoshop to 8 x 10, 300dpi and adjusted for colour, contrast, and light level.

Lodge mosaic:

Faced with the difficult task of taking a pattern from a valuable museum object, a caribou-skin lodge that was 56 feet in length along its bottom edge, 11 feet tall, and comprising 30 caribou skins, I elected to construct a 1/3 scale photographic mosaic to work from. The mosaic would create a replica of manageable size that I could touch and move without attending to the conservation practices required for valuable museum objects. Laying the lodge flat on the floor, I placed two rows of tables on either side of its long axis and used a

[194] The cultural context of these trails was discussed in Chapter 2.

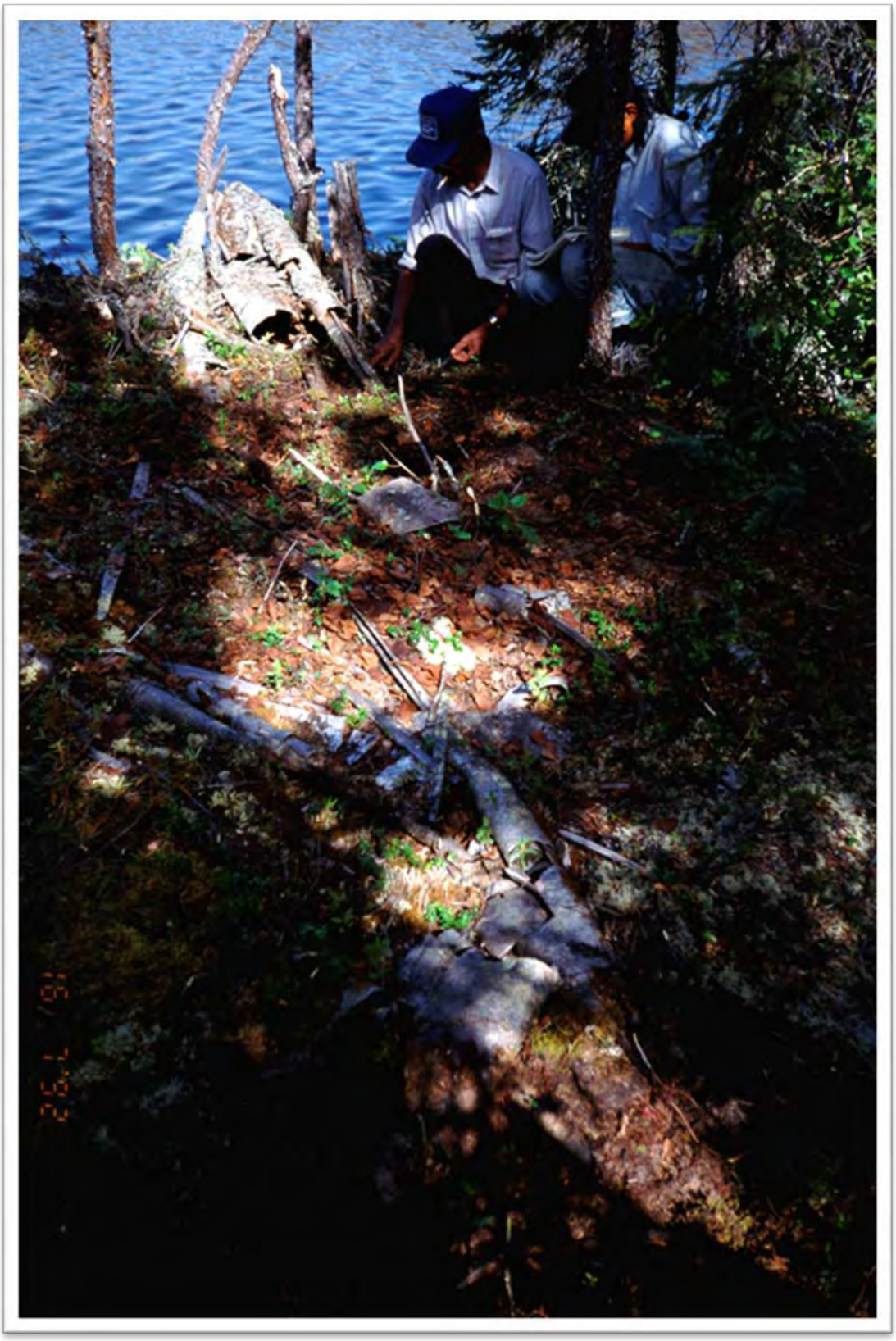

Figure 40: His father's canoe.

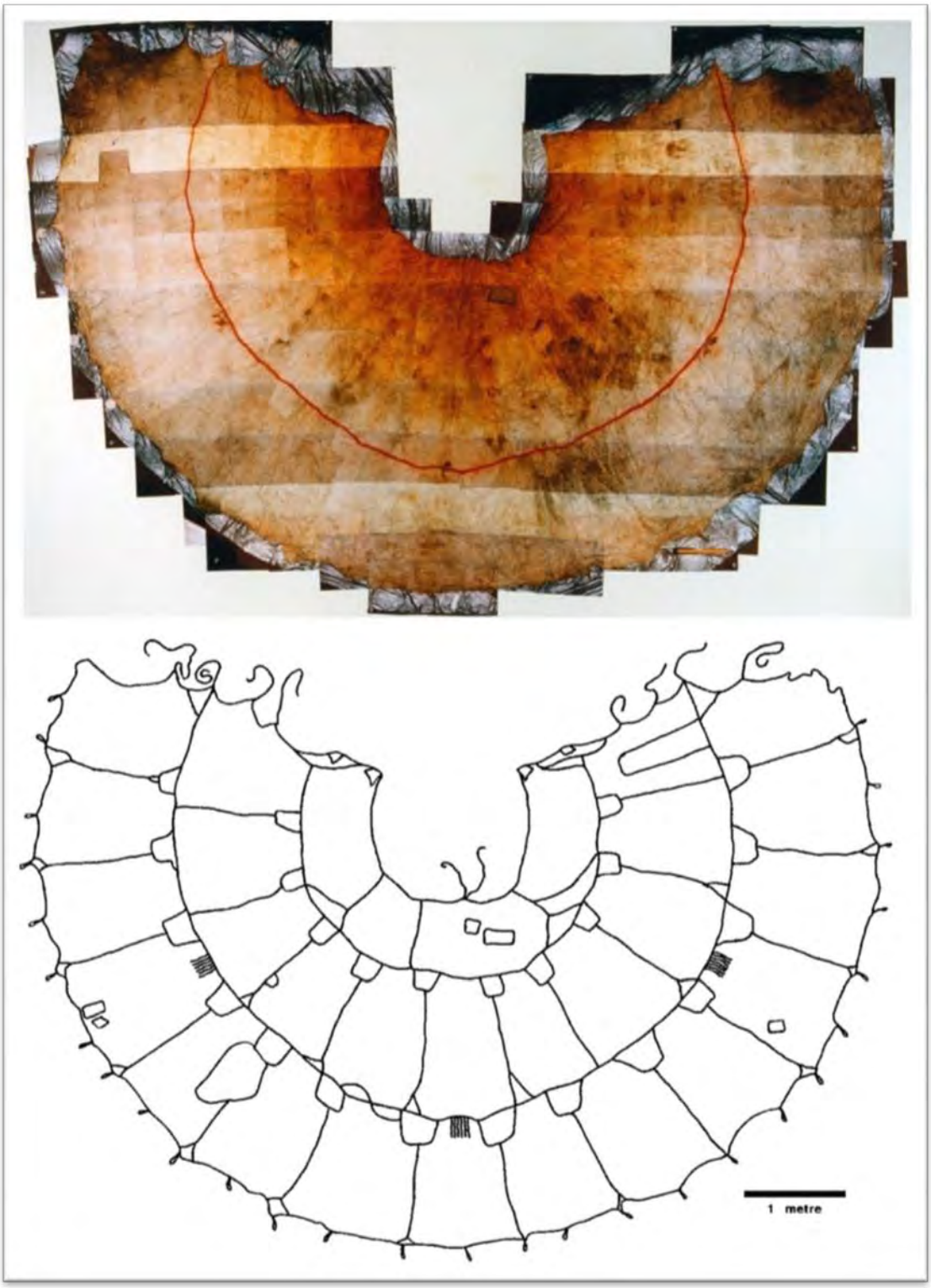

Figure 41: Lodge mosaic and pattern.

ladder to straddle it, providing a platform on which to attach a copy stand with lights and a camera. Starting at one edge of the lodge, I would take a photograph of a small section, being careful to include a scale bar (the yellow ruler), then move the copy stand 25 centimetres along the ladder to position it to take another photograph. In this way the camera was used to document a 'strip' of the lodge with sufficient overlap between the photographs to allow me to 'landmark' them together to recreate the strip in 1/3 replica. By moving the ladder along the tables and repeating the process I documented the lodge in 14 strips, with nearly 300 4x6 photographs. The next task was to create a mosaic from the individual photographs using a glue stick, a task that took a couple of weeks. Once the mosaic was complete (Figure 41, top), I covered it with a sheet of transparent polyethylene film and carefully traced every seam in the lodge, which was later placed against a white background and photographed to create a scaled pattern (Figure 41, bottom). Today, the mosaic has been trimmed and placed on a backing of chloroplast and now adorns a colleague's office wall.[195] The development process has brought unintended colour variation to the normal hues of the lodge, while preserving the natural variation one sees in various parts.

Mosaic constructed from 4x6 colour prints from 35mm colour Kodak film, ISO 100. 1998. Photographed with: 35mm Fuji 100ASA. Digitized with a Nikon 4000 ED Film Scanner. Digital image resized using Microsoft Photoshop to 8 x 10, 300dpi and adjusted for colour, contrast, and light level.

Toby Kotchilea and the lodge:

This photograph, taken in either 1910 or 1912-13 by David Wheeler (1914a), shows a Tłı̨chǫ caribou-skin lodge set on a rocky shoreline (Figure 42). Short, squat, and broad when compared to the soaring tipis of the Great Plains, David Wheeler remarked that in his opinion, the Tłı̨chǫ lodge was almost a perfect habitation, certainly much better than the stuffy log cabins that were replacing them in the years that the image was captured. Brush surrounds the base of the lodge, both to keep insects at bay but also dogs from urinating on the edge. Three dogs can be seen near the lodge and a man is standing, hands on hips, to the left of the lodge. Rosa Huskey, a Tłı̨chǫ elder from Behchokǫ̀, identified the man as her grandfather, the son of Bear Lake Chief. When I first saw this image many years ago, I

[195] The context of the lodge was explored in chapters 5 and 6.

thought that we had found an image of the lodge that Frank Russell had purchased from Bear Lake Chief in 1893. However, since this lodge dates to at least 1910, and Russell had long left the north with the lodge that he purchased, the photograph shows an almost identical lodge. The size, the position of the red ochre band around the middle, the tassel visible dangling from the band, are all in exact proportion and position of the 1893 lodge.

Figure 42: Toby Kotchilea and the lodge.

That the man standing beside it is Bear Lake Chief's son was even more remarkable. However, now we think that this lodge may have been another made by Emma Kowea, Bear Lake Chief's wife, to replace the one that Russell purchased and accounting for its remarkable similarity. As a historical photograph it became a significant icon of a series of related projects that all involved some connection to Bear Lake Chief, a prominent Tłįchǫ trading chief and historical figure. [196]

Black and white image, copied from Wheeler (1914a). Copy Film: 35mm Fuji ISO 100. 1999. Digitized with a Nikon 4000 ED Film Scanner. Digital image resized using Microsoft Photoshop to 8 x 10, 300dpi and adjusted for contrast and light level.

[196] Bear Lake Chief was discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Print Collaborations

A folio of 6 acrylic screenprints on BFK Rives paper, 280gsm, 112 x 76cm. Printed in 2009 at the Visual Research Centre in editions ranging from 7 to 10, 2009. Two sketches and a feature print explore aspects of each of the two background studies of the birchbark canoe and the caribou-skin lodge.

Titles:

Elegant (edition of 7 prints); Figure 43, top.

Stitch (edition of 10 prints); Figure 43, bottom.

Paddle (edition of 10 prints); Figure 44.

Toby (edition of 9 prints); Figure 45, top.

Hand of Bernadette (edition of 9 prints); Figure 45, bottom.

Blue Lodge (edition of 9 prints); Figure 46.

Figure 43. *Elegant* (top) and *Stitch* (bottom)

Figure 44. *Paddle*

Figure 45. *Toby* (top) and *Hand of Bernadette* (bottom)

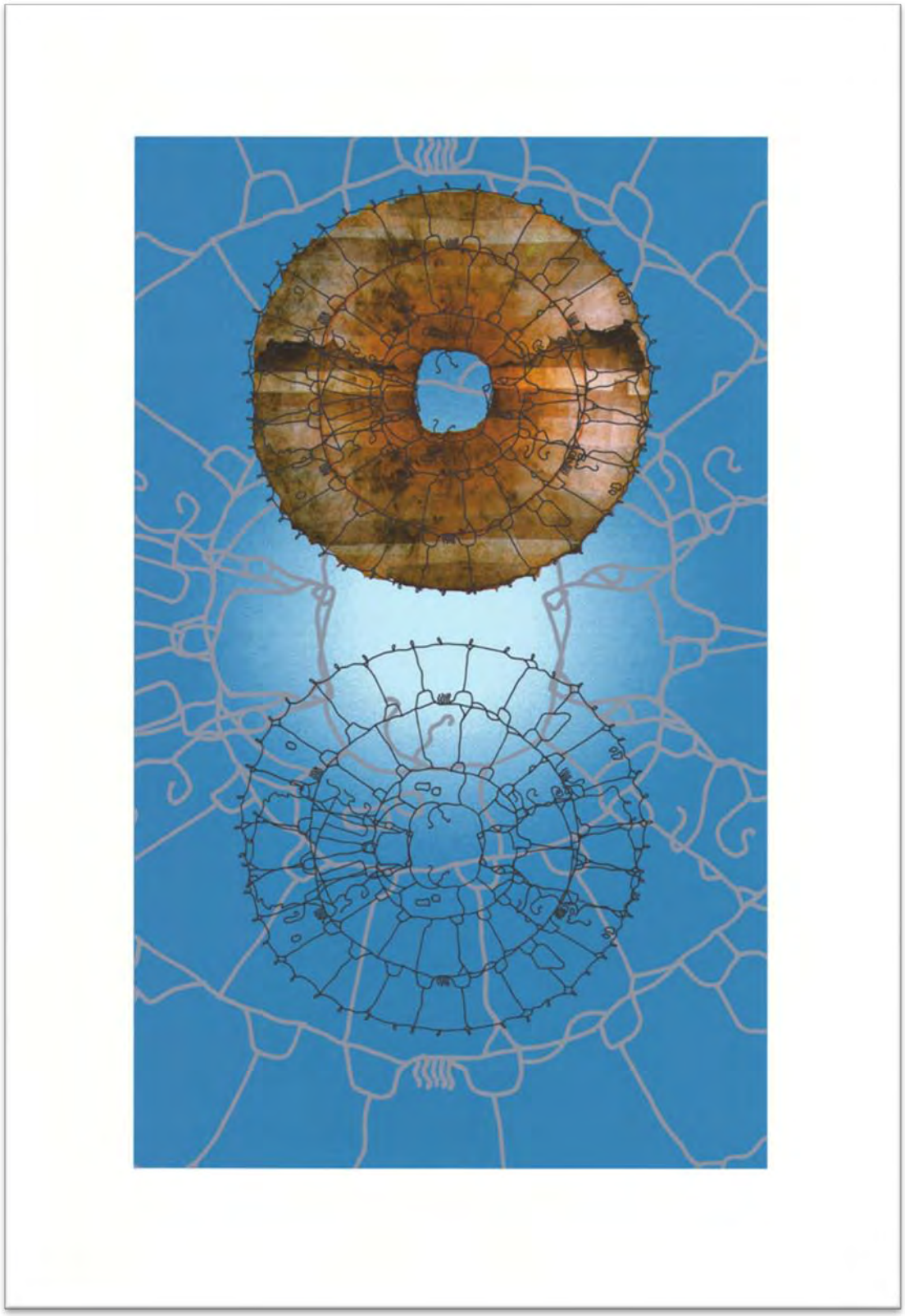

Figure 46. Blue Lodge

The Archaeology of Printmaking

Today, in my practice as an archaeologist I work in field settings where caribou dung, ice, feathers, wood, sinew, and ochre, among others, are as likely to be encountered in a professional capacity as are the stones and bones common to the archaeology of my particular region. In order to make sense of these diverse things and their contexts, I consistently find myself seeking the expert knowledge of a growing number of other scientists: Geneticists, geomorphologists, wood species specialists, experts in ancient technologies, cell biologists, entomologists, physicists, botanists, palynologists, to name a few. This mostly multidisciplinary approach relies on individual disciplines bringing their particular methodologies to a single project to help answer a common or related set of questions, but without inviting change to the individual methods. These collaborations are often tremendously successful and provide unique learning opportunities for all involved (see, for instance, Andrews, MacKay and Andrew 2009).

In contrast, the collaboration described here is an example of interdisciplinarity, where methods of two or more professions and their specific perspectives or 'views,' are integrated to undertake a set of collaborative tasks. The benefit of an interdisciplinary approach is that it permits proximous collaborators to respond to random outcomes through the application of skilled, creative practice, while allowing them to focus on more than one question at any given moment (Macdonald n.d., 2007).[197] By bringing visual information from an anthropologist's fieldwork setting into an artist-printer's studio, we have attempted to investigate ways of layering visual information related to the history, use, and manufacture of Tłı̨chǫ birchbark canoes and caribou-skin lodges in order to explore their aesthetic characteristics. Personally, the collaboration with Dr. Harrison allowed me an opportunity to enter a visual dialogue with an artist-printer to explore new ways of visualizing my own fieldwork experience. Though the *Tegumentum* prints are an outcome, the experience has shown that, like working with knowledgeable indigenous elders in the field, interdisciplinary approaches teach new ways of seeing.

While both printmaking and archaeological site formation requires the layering of diverse strata over a period of time in their creation, the duration of the processes and the matter of the strata are profoundly different. In the formation of an archaeological site the strata are opaque and laid down in ages measured against a geological time scale, while in printmaking, translucent strata are applied in moments of human time scale. While

[197] I am grateful to Professor Macdonald for allowing me to cite these unpublished papers.

archaeological sites require excavation to reveal their knowledge, prints require only the viewer's gaze and imagination to elicit interpretation. By taking photographs of archaeological and ethnographic landscapes and 'mashing' digital renditions of them in screenprints, we intentionally altered how these landscapes are normally viewed. By deconstructing the photographs and recombining their elements in new screenprinted images, we are removing the agency of the photographer's view and the materiality of the photograph and transferring it to the materiality of the screenprint and the imagination of the beholder. In essence, we are releasing the knowledge laminated in the photograph—image and caption—reforming this into a screenprint, and letting it determine its own expression in the imagination of the beholder. Thus, the beholder holds the responsibility for the creation of knowledge. However, the screenprints have also collapsed geological time into the time scale of human experience and in so doing have provided a new way of interpreting and appreciating ethnographic and archaeological landscapes of the Tłı̨chǫ.

Archaeology has been characterized as a destructive practice in that it permanently disassembles the context and constituent parts of an archaeological site, separating artefacts from the associations that give them meaning. However, it has also been characterized as a transformative practice, one that generates information from disassembled contexts. In this way both archaeological excavation and printmaking can be regarded through the same lens: Where one creates a picture by removing layers, disassembling them into interpretable bits, printmaking makes a picture by layering otherwise disassociated colour themes and patterns. In the minds of the practitioner, the archaeologist lives in afterthought while the printer lives in forethought. Only the observer/reader has the power to interpret their thinking. As active agents in the production of knowledge, the prints are mediating our need for explanation with our expectation of imagination.

The recombination of objects is at the root of both processes. Excavation is a kind of deconstruction, where artefacts are removed from an opaque background of buried associations, and contextualized in new settings—an excavation report, a museum exhibit, or 'reburied' in the equally opaque shelves of a museum storage facility. In a similar fashion, the printing process deconstructs photographs, taking constituent parts and compressing them into a single two dimensional surface. In this fashion, the printing process 'retemporalizes' the photographs and, in the process, construct a new narrative history. It also 're-spatializes' the photographs, compressing recognizable places and other subjects into unrecognizable or altered shapes in a new materiality (Edwards 2009). Finally, through

the process of computer digitization, the photographs were first dematerialized into digital forms where they existed as bits and bytes—excavated as an archaeological site might be—and then reconstituted as a computer screen image. Here, they underwent further manipulation, reformed into new images which were then again applied to a paper substrate through the workmanship of a master printer. With the screenprint, we reversed the process, laying down shapes, forms, and colours over time to compose a new landscape, a new archaeology, each layer changing and negotiating with the previous.

Thus, the prints serve as a kind of album—much as a textual report might for the artefacts from an archaeological site—though one that presents its photographic experiences in new ways. In a sense, the prints obfuscate the sensory experience of the original photographs, leading the viewer to look deeper into the image narrative for any intended messages (Edwards 2009). Artefacts might be reburied in their original layers to create a replica of the archaeological site, where a print, though its layers are permanently laminated and inseparable, create something new that can be replicated again and again. Thus, archaeology and printmaking both recontextualize objects' realities, though in different ways. As a form of ethnographic and archaeological representation, the screenprints provide new ways to navigate local landscapes while incorporating them in a global uniformity through the medium of art (Lippard 1998).

Chapter 9) The Trail Ahead.

As Harry often said, the land is like a book and, much like MacCaig's keepers (1968:168), he is able to read the multitude of signs—past and present—that mark the movement of other persons—animal, human, other—that he shares the landscape with. These persons are all in some way kin and, together, they occupy their common landscape much as a family occupies a lodge. In this way, Harry was always at home. This idea has embedded itself in my sense of who Harry Simpson was: No matter where I encountered him, he always looked the same, giving me a sense that he was always at home. Whether I saw him in his home community of Gamèti, at a meeting in Yellowknife, in a tent or canoe on the trail, or as he stood over a caribou or moose as he butchered it, he wore the same clothes, exhibited the same friendly behaviour, and acted toward me in the same way. He always wore a baseball cap and took it off only when required to by custom or need. His pants, always in colours of blue, brown, or black, were neatly creased, worn with a long sleeve cotton shirt and a white undershirt. He wore long johns for most of the year, removing them only when the sweltering days of late July or early August forced him to. He possessed a variety of coats and other outer warm clothes and would change these as the weather or season dictated. I noticed this, perhaps, because in contrast, I have sets of clothes particular not only to different seasons as with Harry's outer clothes, but also to different situations. I dress one way when going to work, change my clothes when I arrive home, and have an entirely different set for travelling in the bush. For me, the daily ritual of changing my clothes when I arrive home is a comforting one, a practice that announces that I have arrived 'home' having returned from being 'away.'

This suggests that Harry and I have different senses of what 'home' is. In a recent paper, Jennie Germann Molz (2008:327; emphasis original) noted that "*[a]bode* has two meanings: (1) sojourn: a temporary stay; and (2) home: the place where one abides" and she suggests that "[i]n its dual meaning as both sojourn and home, *abode* allows us to think of home as emplaced and stationary yet simultaneously in flux and temporary". I would suggest that Harry's version of home conflates these two meanings in that he is always at home because he is always (or almost so) in a state of flux. For me, home is my house and when away from it am on a sojourn. The ritual of changing my clothes is a way of endorsing these two conditions. In contrast, Harry was always at home because he was always on a sojourn. In other words, he was as comfortable in his clothes as he was in his mobility and I think this is at the core of Tłı̨chǫ identity, a characteristic state of being Dene. Though travel

was a constant practice it was never a chore, for the experience of movement was akin to being at home, to being comfortable, engaged in life's most pleasurable activity. Through the medium of dreams, even in sleep the Dene travelled cosmological trails.

Stories are another key component of Dene mobility, important not only for the messages they contain, as Paul Wright has eloquently reminded us, but also for the way they teach. Following the adventures of ancient culture-heroes, young listeners can travel a story's trail marked by place names well-known to them from their own travels. In their imagination, their embodied emotional and muscular responses to the actions of the protagonists' travels and actions allow them to gauge their own practical capacity for rendering a similar outcome. Thus, stories teach in a fashion similar to the embodied process of living daily lives while travelling in the landscape, though without the inherent dangers that this might possess. In the safety and comfort of the lodge, while the play of firelight and low voices and laughter help set a tone of security, stories become didactic travelogues letting youthful apprentices practice their own skills through imaginative application in a safe setting. Ingold (2001:141-2) has referred to this as "an education of attention," where a "novice is instructed to attend particularly to this or that aspect of what can be seen, touched, or heard, so as to get the 'feel' of it for him- or herself," a way of attuning his or her perceptual system. George Sturt, in his book "The Woodwright's Shop", introduced in the first chapter, intends a similar meaning when he noted that "[m]y own eyes know because my hands have felt…" (2000: 24). Stories help the hands feel. Keith Basso's (1984, 1996a) research has demonstrated this as well, though in a slightly different sense, where a story teaches by invoking its memory through the elicitation of its place-name home. Julie Cruikshank (2005) has suggested something similar by noting that stories constitute local knowledge. For the Dene, stories are embedded in landscape and in a pedagogy that uses the link between mobility, place, and the past to teach youth about life on the land.

Museum anthropology is largely about telling stories, too. Stories that are formulated through performative, collaborative efforts with a multitude of knowledgeable and skilful people who tell their own stories, listen to those of others, and then adopt a common methodology to create new narratives. These new narratives can take the form of a birchbark canoe, a caribou-skin lodge, a museum exhibit, a school installation, an educational camp, or a series of screenprints: All are products of a collaborative enterprise that in some way, engage all of the senses. Sometimes these collaborations are multidisciplinary, though usually they are interdisciplinary where, more often than not, it is

the museum anthropologist who is engaging with new methods, with the techniques of others, ultimately a richly rewarding and educating experience. To engage in this form of storytelling, a museum must be willing to take off its bricks and mortar clothing, put on its travel clothes, and reach outside to visit the communities that give it life, work in performative ways outside the collection storage room and gallery walls. Through collaborations with elders, artists, artisans, and other knowledgeable and skilled members of its community, museums can help engage with new narratives that teach in new ways. Bringing elders and youth together to replicate a birchbark canoe revitalizes not only the techniques and knowledge required to make a canoe, but also an ancient pedagogy of using the land as teacher, as the youth are guided in how to collect spruce wood for the frame, birchbark for the covering, as well as spruce roots and gum for sewing it together and making it watertight. Museum professionals experience this too and, in the process, learn new things about objects in the collection that would not be available to them in other ways. As a performative enterprise, their collaborative efforts generate new objects, leading to new narratives that can then be returned inside brick and mortar walls to offer new presentations in schools or museum galleries. Perhaps most importantly, as Paul Wright observed, the familiarity of working together builds respect and trust between partners.

I have purposely not attempted to define museum anthropology, or replicate the definitions of others, as I believe it must be made to fit each museum situation. At a basic level it can involve any or all of anthropology's subfields, is largely a performative, interdisciplinary enterprise using collaborative methods while engaged with knowledgeable and skilled members of the community, and involves creating new narratives about things of interest to the partners and wider public. For museum anthropologists, employment terms often places a higher value on public engagement than on scholarly writing, leaving the balance of these two worlds to the employee. Both are important, however, as each provides ways of engaging in dialogue that provide evaluation and critique leading, hopefully, to more meaningful collaboration.

One of the benefits of engaging in creative collaboration is that it frequently suggests further stories to explore, a chance to look at the trail ahead. In looking over the stories contained in this thesis several new ones are suggested. Stories, storytelling, and the effort given to remembering them are a key part of the Dene experience, so important that I have heard many Dene express what Paul Wright's elders said to him: 'There is knowledge in this story, find it and keep it. The story itself will not keep you alive but the lesson will help you survive. If you do not listen properly you cannot learn the lesson. Your path to survival

will be unclear.' Though I understand Ingold's idea that stories are part of an 'education of attention,' I have this uneasy feeling that somehow this precise construction misses something critical that helps explain why stories receive such important cultural status. Recent research into the role that emotion (Gieser 2008) plays in storytelling, and the way the storytelling events are structured with respect to the here and now (Perrino 2011), offer rich avenues of further study, as is the need to continue documenting stories. Though much effort has been made in mapping place names, very little analysis has been undertaken regarding the spatial distribution of the stories themselves. Not in the sense of what folklorists have done, for example, chasing the occurrence of the earth-diver story around the globe but, rather, mapping the spatial distribution of story lessons within a single culture. What might a map of story lessons reveal about how people engage with their landscape? Does the landscape help order the story lessons in a logical fashion? *Yamǫǫ̀zha* travelled the same trails that the Tłı̨chǫ travel today but does the route and direction of his travel suggest a lesson plan that can be taught through travelling the same route in the same direction with storytelling providing the link? The trail ahead is richly endowed with possibility.

In his book, "The Woodwright's Shop," George Sturt comments that when judging whether a piece of wood had seasoned properly and now had the required weight for a task, he would heft it in his hand. "Without scales to go by," he notes, "ones arms learnt (in an artist's way) what mattered. In my muscles I knew" (Sturt 2000: 80). Creative practice develops embodied knowledge that is difficult, sometimes impossible, to convey to others. It is learned over years of practice-led research, a way of knowing through experiencing that grows with each project. In casting back over his own career, Sturt (2000: xv) noted that though it was not his intent when writing his book, the experience became something of an autobiography and so it is with my effort here. In my role as museum anthropologist I have worked with many skilled and knowledgeable people to help create new narratives, a few of which are retold in these pages. However, it has also left me with an embodied knowledge that cannot be conveyed. Ingrained in my memory and in the materiality of my body, these experiences live with me. Writing about them—or trying to—is, thus, something of an autobiographical experience. Others have expressed this in similar ways. For instance, the anonymous anthropologist who, responding to a survey on the role and nature of fieldnotes in professional practice, commented "I am a fieldnote," capturing neatly both the role of memory and the embodied nature of the experience of doing fieldwork (Jackson 1990: 21). Nonetheless, they prepare us for future research, providing us with perspective and ideas,

the skills to engage in dialogue with others in new performative collaborations, and the capacity to complete them. And so lays the trail ahead.

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HBCA Hudson's Bay Company Archives

NAA National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

NWTA Northwest Territories Archives

SIA Smithsonian Institution Archives

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